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- Anthony Lewis vs. Charles Peters: Should losers pay?
- Brooks Jackson slays the PACs
- Just Say Nonsense: Nancy Reagan's drug programs don't work
- The not very reassuring past of Ira Magaziner

The Washington Monthly

May 1993/$3.50

Rock and Rule

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By Christopher Georges

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The Washington Monthly

Volume Twenty-Five, Number Five May 1993

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LETTERS

Morality check

Gossip is as old as human nature, but when a reputable publication such as yours leeringly speculates about romantic relationships between government officials, it elevates rumors to the status of news and legitimates sleaze. The fact that most newspapers and magazines indulge in such speculation routinely is no excuse.

"Preventative gossip" indeed.

MARGARET M. MCKAY
Houston, Texas

Susan Threadgill's extraordinary "explanation" in response to the "How Could You's" engendered by the original Laura Tyson item was infuriating. I was—I am—astonished by the smarmy, patronizing, and self-serving tone of this "apology."

Believe me, I do not need this or any magazine to watch the president for "unmistakable manifestations of interest." "Who's Who" was once a very useful way to help readers keep track of personnel changes in the federal government, but it has degenerated into an innuendo-laden gossip column.

Please cancel my subscription, effective immediately.

BARRY STEIN
Cambridge, Massachusetts

If you are serious about appointing yourselves guardians of the president's morality to prevent possible missteps, why not have your editorial panel of sexual attraction experts identify the 200 most desirable women that Clinton is likely to have contact with in the next four years and publish all their pictures in a TWM special issue? It might outsell the *Sports Illustrated* swimsuit edition.

In the meantime, I think you owe President Clinton, Ms. Tyson, and your readers an apology.

MARK MARQUARDT
Chicago, Illinois

I don't care how many irate readers complain of your noting Bill Clinton's taking a "special interest" in Laura Tyson, you were completely right to do so. The last thing this country needs is another JFK-style womanizer who might jeopardize the national interest while knowingly being cozy with Sam Giancana's good friend, Judith Exner.

Don't stop policing Bill Clinton. We can't afford another S&L debacle because the press and media sit on their hands. Keep those elected and appointed officials honest.

LINDA KAREN BISGAARD
Rahway, New Jersey

The editors reply:

Thank goodness for Ms. Bisgaard, but we've received enough letters like the others on our "Who's Who" Laura Tyson item to make us want to explain again why we published it. Gossip is a useful tool in understanding the world of Washington to about the degree that we use it in this magazine—one or two pages out of 62. But when you do gossip, you must phrase it as carefully as possible and not imply more than you have actually heard. In this case, we erred in our choice of words and did not mean to imply that Ms. Tyson did anything to attract Bill Clinton's attention. For that poor phrasing, we owe, and offer, Ms. Tyson and our readers an apology.

That said, there is another key criterion for publishing gossip: That there be a good reason to run an item other than mere rumor-mongering. And we had such a reason in this case: Clinton's tendency to get himself in trouble with women other than his wife—and then have to cover up. To explain the perils that we believe accompany that tendency, we must backtrack to the 1992 New Hampshire primary.

The *Monthly* was among the few members of the media who thought Bill Clinton got away with quite a lot during the Gennifer Flowers episode. Cowed by James Carville's admonitions, the media, we felt, abdicated its duty to pursue a legitimate story that reflected on the character of the candidate. As evidence we note that no major newspaper printed the transcript of the conversation between Clinton and Flowers in which they discussed the Arkansas state job Flowers seemed to have been given as part of a cover up of her relationship with the governor.

On the Flowers tapes, in language reminiscent of Richard Nixon discussing Watergate with his cronies, Clinton told Flowers:

"I just think that if everybody's on record denying it, you've got no problem."

"But if everybody kind of hangs tough, there's just not going to be anything."

"If they ever asked you if you talked to me about it, you can say no."

Our fear is that then-candidate Clinton came away from that experience with the sense that he had slipped a noose—and might be able to do so again. There is genuine danger in that message. John F. Kennedy, you will recall, enjoyed a pliant media which overlooked his sundry philanderings. To be sure, not all of JFK's affairs resulted in public harm. His relationship with Ben Bradlee's sister-in-law, for example, probably only resulted in Bradlee, then of *Newsweek*, receiving more favorable treatment than his press competitors. But other affairs did have a public effect: Kennedy's liaison with Judith Exner, the mistress of a mobster, exposed him to the

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possibility of blackmail both by the mafia and by J. Edgar Hoover, who knew of that affair and others.

No, we do not see ourselves as pious arbiters of presidential mores, but we very badly want to see this new president succeed. And we believe that the media, by pointing out possible signs of trouble in advance, can help keep Clinton out of Kennedyesque hot water.

Cover charge

To my chagrin, I was recently bamboozled into paying $3.50 for your March issue, which featured a Rooseveltian cover of Clinton and a large headline, "A NEW FDR OR ANOTHER BUSH LEAGUER?"

Nothing in the magazine answered this question. Given the fact that the president and spouse pop in and out of our media like birds on a cuckoo clock, my question is whether this glittery cover, devoid of solid internal backup content, is a brilliant zen-like metaphor for the new administration.

L.M. GUBRIUS-PENEMZA
Washington, D.C.

Lighting up

Having read "Butt Out" [January/February], I thought you would be interested in seeing the enclosed editorial from the *Washington Times*.

The editorial specifically criticizes ABC-TV's reliance on the accusation of a disgruntled former employee in a segment on the tobacco industry. The employee, Dr. Anthony Colucci, offered to sell his silence to his former employer in return for $5 million. That same individual was heavily relied upon by Justin Catanoso as a source for the article in your publication.

The unquestionable bias of Catanoso has been widely catalogued in his articles in the Greensboro *News & Record* and should have provided your magazine with some reason to question his objectivity in preparing his article for your publication. And the motives of his sources, notably Dr. Colucci, speak for themselves.

MAURA T. PAYNE
Director, External Communications & Issues
R.J. Reynolds Tobacco Company
Winston-Salem, North Carolina

Justin Catanoso replies:

Neither the *News & Record* nor the *Monthly* depended on Dr. Colucci as a source nearly to the degree that "PrimeTime Live" did. To corroborate Colucci's version of events, I interviewed two other scientists at Reynolds and obtained a confidential company document which independently evaluated Reynolds' smoking-and-health program in the sixties. The document confirmed the extent of the biological research, its sophistication, and the conclusion that Reynolds' scientists were learning things about cigarettes' health effects that the company did not disclose. In 1970, the biological research was cut off and 26 biochemists were fired.

Fundamentally wrong

Iranian fundamentalists send their children to die in senseless combat with Iraq. Irish Catholics in the IRA blow up small children in shopping malls. Muslim and Hindu fundamentalists kill each other in India. American fundamentalists blow up abortion clinics and kill doctors. While not every religious fundamentalist is a bomb-thrower, the fundamentalist world view—that there is one Revealed Truth and they have it—sets the stage for these acts and nurtures those who commit them.

Now comes Jon Meacham ["What the Religious Right Can Teach the New Democrats," April] to tell us that, despite the almost uninterrupted rule of the fundamentalist world view for the last 25 years (from Spiro Agnew to Dan Quayle), it is still not enough.

I'm sorry, Mr. Meacham, but you are wrong. Read Stephanie Coontz's book, *The Way We Never Were*, and find out, among other things, that the U.S. had the world's highest divorce rate in the eighties—the 1880s. This belief that ideal family and moral values existed and require the government to restore them once again is just Religious Right propaganda.

FRED FACHET
Warrenville, Illinois

The Washington Monthly

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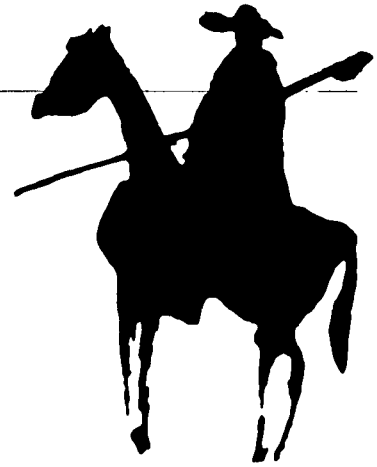
TILTING AT WINDMILLS



Leon Panetta, who as the director of the Office of Management and Budget is supposed to be above such things, has tucked $100 million into the budget to build a new state university on the grounds of Fort Ord, which is scheduled to be closed. According to the director of the California Higher Education Policy Center, the new campus is not needed. So why is the money in the budget? It may of course be only a coincidence that Fort Ord is located in the district Panetta represented in Congress. . . .

No public figure in memory has been so capable of arousing both our highest hopes and our deepest anxieties as Bill Clinton. The hopes were encouraged by his State of the Union address. The anxieties—or at least mine—were exacerbated by the report in last month's "Who's Who" that members of Clinton's Secret Service detail don't like him—I always pay a lot of attention to how a leader is regarded by his spear-carriers—and by Clinton's leak-a-phobia and evident hyper-sensitivity to criticism. One of the more bizarre examples of the latter occurred in the case of Army Lt. General Barry R. McCaffrey, who alleged that he was insulted by a woman at the White House who replied to his "good morning" with "I don't talk to the military." Clinton's first reaction to this charge was to deny it in absolute terms in a speech at Annapolis: "Those kind of stories, they're all just made up out of whole cloth." Clinton later made a big point of publicly jogging with—and promoting—the general, which doesn't exactly sound like he was truly certain the story was false.

But what made me even more uncomfortable was that the Annapolis speech went on to accuse reporters of focusing too much on rumors instead of on the successes of his administration. FDR and JFK occasionally descended into this kind of petulance—remember that, in response to critical stories, Kennedy cancelled the White House subscription to the *New York Herald-Tribune* and Roosevelt awarded the Nazi Iron Cross to a columnist from the New York *Daily News*. Most of the time, however, they were smart enough to realize that they could learn from the leaks and knew the worst error they could make was to let press criticism distract them from concentrating on doing the things that count, like creating and getting enacted a health program that is universal and affordable. The greatest danger of paranoia is that it takes your eye off the ball. . . .

"Janet Reno Starts Badly" was the headline over an editorial in *The New York Times* condemning Reno for having dismissed the U.S. attorneys who had been appointed by the Reagan-Bush administrations. What did she do wrong? Every administration appoints its own U.S. attorneys. One could argue that the custom is wrong and that attorneys who have demonstrated outstanding ability should be retained, but the editorial criticized Reno, not the custom. Instead of criticizing her for the firings, the *Times* should focus on whom the administration *hires*—on the kind of lawyers it chooses to replace the departing incumbents. That's how Janet Reno and Bill Clinton will reveal their true colors. . . .

The Washington Times recently revealed that the Clinton administration has dumped 25,000 unread, unprocessed résumés out of the 40,000 it received from citizens hoping to serve as a part of the new administration. But if you read Ed Rogers' piece ["Transition Admission"] in our January/February issue, you know the Republicans did the same thing. The lesson for the innocent is don't think just submitting a résumé, however gilt-edged it might be, will get you a plum job. It's perfectly possible that no one will ever look at the résumé unless it is accompanied by phone calls and letters from influential sponsors. . . .

The dumbest thing that a new administration can do is to be defensive. The smartest thing it can do is admit what's wrong. You'll recall this advice in last month's column. I was reminded of it again when I read with approval what Henry Cisneros said after the first inspection of his new realm at the Department of Housing and Urban Development: "This is an Alice in Wonderland world. No human being could ever

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consciously create something this gridlocked and mazed." . . .

Lloyd Bentsen recently inspired a sigh of relief from the affluent audience of PBS's *Wall Street Week* when he assured host Louis Rukeyser that there was no danger of an increase in the estate tax. Since the present law permits Jason and Jennifer's parents to slip them a cool $1.2 million tax-free, the estate tax, as regular readers know, seems to us an ideal opportunity to raise revenue and decrease the deficit without doing any harm. Will a higher tax sap the initiative of parents eager to make money to pass on to their offspring? The evidence says no. The estate tax was much higher in the forties, fifties, and sixties, when economic growth and employment figures were much better than they have been in recent years.

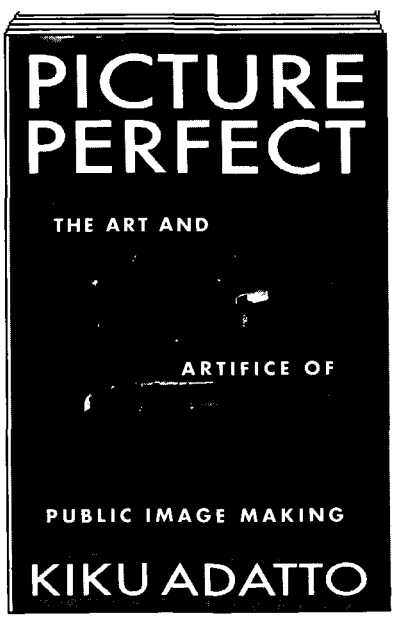
Warren Buffett has pointed out the irony of the wealthy sitting around complaining about the debilitating effect of food stamps while simultaneously setting up their children with a lifetime supply of food stamps called stocks and bonds. The only difference is that instead of having to deal with a harried bureaucrat in a grim and grimy welfare office, Jennifer and Jason will sit in leather chairs in the paneled office of a trust department vice president.

Buffett is against inherited wealth, period. We don't go that far at the *Monthly*. We simply want to reverse the absurd decline in the number of estates that get taxed at all—down from 10 percent to 3 percent in just the last dozen years. Raising the public's share of the roughly $200 billion that gets passed on annually from the present pitiful 6 percent to even 25 percent would yield a neat $50 billion a year for deficit cutting, health care, and other urgent needs. . . .

Why is it that government employees report in sick one-third more than the average worker in the private sector? . . .

In the midst of a bar exam that was being conducted in Pasadena, California, a law student suffered an epileptic seizure, writhing on the floor and turning blue. Two other students rushed to his aid, trying to keep his head back and jaw forward so he would not choke on his tongue. When he stopped breathing, they administered cardiopulmonary resuscitation and saved his life. This took 40 minutes. The good Samaritans asked for a 40 minute extension of the exam time-limit to allow them a fair chance to finish the exam. The request was denied. The 500 other students who were taking the exam and who did not respond to the victim now know that they made the smart choice. They also demonstrated the moral character required by the profession

Is Seeing Believing?



Has our growing awareness that pictures can be fabricated enabled us to see through the artifice of professional image makers? In this important book, Kiku Adatto concludes that, in spite of our growing sophistication, we continue to be moved by the pictures we see on television, in movies, and in photographs because they tap into ideals and myths still alive in our culture.

"A frightening reminder of how easily we can be influenced by the images generated by advertising, still photography, and the movies."

—*Bob Schieffer,* **The Washington Monthly**

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they aspire to enter. (OK, that was a bit severe, but I couldn't resist.) . . .

Price Controls Don't Work has become the conventional wisdom. So when administration officials recently raised the possibility that controls might be part of the Clinton health plan, the media reacted by once again proclaiming the CW. The catch is that the CW is wrong, as is much of the "evidence" on which it is based. For instance, NBC News' John Cochran, in part of what purported to be an objective news report, declared:

> In 1971, Richard Nixon froze everything, not just prices on health care. But when Nixon lifted the lid after two years, prices doubled.

This is wrong—way wrong. Prices went up, not 100 percent, but considerably less than 20 percent in the 1973–74 period. There were two factors in the rise. The minor one was that the economy was stimulated in 1972 in order to assure a prosperity that would help Nixon's campaign for re-election. The major cause was the OPEC price increases of 1973–74. Neither of these factors had anything to do with price controls.

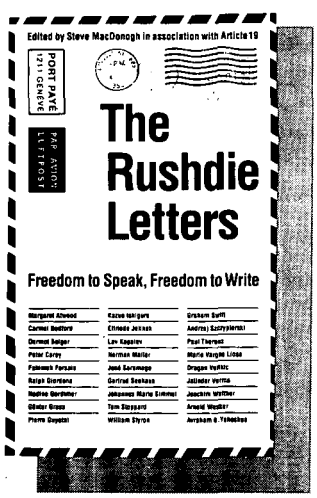
The truth is that price controls worked to halt inflation in the 1971–72 period and even more efficiently and dramatically in the 1943–45 period during which wartime inflationary pressures were tremendous. The only serious (meaning double-digit) inflation we've had in this country in my lifetime was not caused by price controls. Double-digit inflation occurred in 1946–47, 1973–74, and 1979–80. In the latter two cases, an actual or perceived shortage of oil was the main cause. In 1946–47, there was a tremendous pent-up demand for products such as automobiles that were in short supply not because of previous price controls but because of wartime decisions to produce war equipment instead of cars and dishwashers and refrigerators.

There is, however, some evidence, such as New York's experience with rent control, that price controls won't work indefinitely. But that doesn't mean they can't be used to bring a temporary halt to the kind of inflationary spiral we have had in health care costs and give the country a chance to attack the underlying causes of the spiral.

There is also some intriguing evidence from the military that professional salaries can be controlled over a long period of time without impairing the quality of the professional involved. Even our most senior officers earn less than the average physician. Yet we have managed to provide them with a comfortable, if not luxurious, living that has, at least during my lifetime, meant that compensation has not been a major reason for leaving the military. . . .

As you have probably gathered, I have a tendency to brag about the *Monthly* children, the young—of course some of them are now middle-aged—writers whose careers were launched in these pages. One we were among the first to publish is *The Washington Post*'s Howard Kurtz. You should read his new book, *Media Circus: The Trouble With American Newspapers*. Unlike most media critics, Kurtz does not exempt his newspaper from criticism. An example from his book is his account of the sexual

To whom it may concern,



Internationally renowned authors write public letters to Salman Rushdie, responding to the most extreme example of censorship in modern times. This volume collects their letters, Rushdie's reply, his essay on his exile, "A Thousand Days in a Balloon," and a chronology of the *fatwa*.

Authors include Nobel laureate Nadine Gordimer, Margaret Atwood, Saul Bellow, Peter Carey, Günter Grass, Mario Vargas Llosa, Norman Mailer, José Saramago, Gertrud Seehaus, Tom Stoppard, William Styron, Paul Theroux, Dragan Velikic, and Arnold Wesker.

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harassment allegation made against Juan Williams by female staffers at the *Post* at the time that Williams was writing sympathetically about Clarence Thomas's nomination to the Supreme Court. Kurtz criticizes practically everyone involved, most notably Len Downie, the *Post*'s executive editor and Kurtz's boss.

One of Kurtz's recent columns, however, did not seem to me to go far enough. This was his account of the White House correspondents' rebellion against Clinton administration policy that prohibits government officials from accepting fancy meals paid for by lobbyists and journalists. The reporters wanted the White House to waive the rule for the annual dinner given by the White House Correspondents' Association. "The central transaction of the dinners," writes Kurtz, "is the wooing of powerful or merely famous guests to sup with a particular news organization. This is believed to aid in source development and to confer bragging rights over rival news organizations." What Kurtz fails to spell out is that when a Mike Deaver, a James Baker, or a Dick Darman accepted such invitations, there was often an implied commitment by the inviting reporter to go easy on or, at worst, give adulatory coverage to the big-shot guest. Journalists who are quick to see a conflict of interest in others are blind to their own. . . .

Last month I complained about the American media's apparent predisposition to ignore, downplay, or conceal good news about the Canadian health system. The latest example is a story by *The Wall Street Journal*'s George Anders that reported, "Two new studies suggest that Canadian hospitals are providing care at costs significantly lower than U.S. hospitals without compromising patients' treatment." Where did the *Journal* choose to run this story? Why, on page B-5, of course. . . .

A comparable mystery is why the Clinton administration and Congress have similarly ignored the news from Canada. My guess is that there are two reasons for this. The "market" is in vogue among liberal policy makers, and the Canadian plan does not emphasize competitive forces. More importantly, politicians fear a fight to the death with lobbyists. And, since the Canadian plan would destroy the American health insurance industry, that industry will fight like a cornered rat to escape its fate. Politicians don't like making such enemies. And often they're right. It's better to get everyone under the same tent so that no one, as LBJ so delicately put it, is outside pissing in. But sometimes you have to make enemies.

Frankly, health insurance executives—or even their descendants unto the end of time—do not seem to me to constitute a severe threat to the political future of Bill and Hillary Clinton or the members of Congress. . . .

Why has the airline business suffered in recent years? I have a theory that has nothing to do with the usual economic explanations. It is that airline patronage declines in inverse proportion to the increase in flights that require a change of plane at a "hub" airport. A few layovers in one of these hideous places are enough to make you wonder if there's any other way you can get there, or do you really want to go enough to endure the hassle? Maybe, you think, the whole matter can be handled by a phone call or exchange of faxes. . . .

—*Charles Peters*

When *Death* is Preferable To Life

Someone you love is dying. She is incontinent, racked with pain, unable to drink, eat or even care. Medical technology works overtime, even when the body can't go on. The grieving family looks to medical professionals for answers that may never come. Sad scenarios like this are played out every day all over the United States.

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Tort and Retort:

An Exchange Between Anthony Lewis and Charles Peters

Should we make litigants pay for the court cases they lose?

In a response to a proposal to reform the legal system published in a recent issue of this magazine, Anthony Lewis lays out the argument against forcing losing parties to pay winners' legal fees in civil cases. Charles Peters' reply follows.

Critics of our civil justice system argue that the American economy is burdened by frivolous lawsuits and inflated damage awards. They say they have a cure for the disease: Make the losing party in any civil case pay the winner's legal fees. The British do it that way, they argue, and look at how much less litigious a society theirs is.

The fee-shifting idea, as it is called, has won much support in recent years. It was at the heart of Dan Quayle's proposals for "tort reform." Charles Peters, editor in chief of this magazine, put it at the top of his list of "eighteen cost-free steps to a better America" (see "No Dollars, Common Sense," December 1992). If faced with the prospect of paying both sides' lawyers' bills, Peters said, plaintiffs would not bring frivolous suits and defendants would not use delaying tactics to prolong cases they know they will eventually lose.

It seems such a simple solution. But the consequences would not be as advertised—not in the real world. Consider a real case: the litigation between Robert Manning, writer and former editor of *The Atlantic*, and Mortimer B. Zuckerman, the real estate and publishing tycoon. Manning describes the case in his recent autobiography, *The Swamp Root Chronicle*.

Zuckerman bought *The Atlantic* in 1980 for $3.6 million, to be paid in four annual installments. He gave Manning a contract binding him to remain editor for up to five years and promising him pension payments. But shortly after the deal was made, Zuckerman removed Manning as editor and announced that he would make no more payments to Manning and the others who had sold their shares in the magazine to him. He said he was refusing to pay because the true financial state of *The Atlantic* had been concealed from him. The others, including the principal former owner, Marion Campbell, sued Zuckerman in federal court for the money owed. Manning could not, because he, like Zuckerman, was a citizen of Massachusetts at that time. He sued in a state court.

Five years passed—years of frustration for Manning. Zuckerman's lawyers used every conceivable tactic to delay the case. Manning could not possibly pay for the legal work needed to keep up with them, although he stayed in the game with financial help from Campbell. Then Manning turned 65. Under Massachusetts law, he was entitled to a speedy trial. The trial was set for Nov. 13, 1986, but on Nov. 12, Zuckerman's lawyers settled the case, agreeing to pay Manning every cent owed him for his *Atlantic* shares, plus five years of withheld extra pension payments and interest.

Now suppose the British rule, which shifts the fee to the loser, had been in effect. Supporters of the British rule would no doubt argue that Zuckerman would have calculated the possibility of having to pay Manning's legal bills as well as his own, and would therefore have called off his lawyers and settled the case much sooner. That, however, is nonsense. Zuckerman had very deep pockets, and he could deduct all his legal bills. The amount of money at stake in the dispute with Manning was peanuts to him. For whatever reason, he had decided to stick it to Manning. The notion that he would have given up for fear of having to pay Manning's legal bills is laughable.

But if you look at it from Manning's side, fear would have been overwhelming. He was already vastly outgunned in the finances of the lit-

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igation and was able to keep fighting only by virtue of Campbell's generosity. Would that—could that—have continued if there had been a risk of having to pay the undoubtedly enormous fees of Zuckerman's lawyers? And there always is a risk. After all, no one can be absolutely certain how a jury will react.

The lesson is clear: A plaintiff of modest income would face far worse odds against a rich defendant under the British rule. And the same is true for defendants of modest means, as is shown by the case of *Immuno A.G.* v. *Moor-Jankowski.*

Immuno, a multinational company based in Austria, planned to conduct hepatitis research using chimpanzees captured in Sierra Leone. Dr. Shirley McGreal, chairwoman of the International Primate Protection League, wrote a letter of protest to the editor of the *Journal of Medical Primatology*, a specialist publication with a circulation of 300. She argued, among other things, that the plan might decimate the wild chimpanzee population because methods of capturing chimpanzees involved killing their mothers, and that any captured animals returned to the wild might spread hepatitis to other chimpanzees. In 1983, after the letter was published, Immuno brought a libel action against eight defendants, including McGreal and the editor of the journal, Dr. Jan Moor-Jankowski, who was also a professor at the New York University Medical School.

Over the next several years, Immuno conducted discovery proceedings that were burdensome and costly to the defendants. Eventually all of them except Moor-Jankowski settled with Immuno because of the prohibitive cost of litigating against a rich plaintiff. McGreal, confident that she had done nothing wrong, did not want to settle, but her insurance company, having already spent $250,000 on legal fees, agreed to pay Immuno $100,000 on her behalf. That left Moor-Jankowski alone, facing an Immuno charge for $4 million in damages. He, too, was covered by an insurance company, which agreed to carry on while he asked the New York courts where the suit was brought to dismiss it on summary judgment.

The twists and turns of the Immuno case are too numerous to relate here. It finally ended in 1991, when New York's highest court, the Court of Appeals, held that McGreal's letter to the editor was an expression of opinion protected by both the First Amendment and the Constitution of New York. So Moor-Jankowski won. But he wrote a letter to the editor of *The New York Times* commenting bitterly on his "victory:"

> I am a full-time research professor at the New York University School of Medicine and the unpaid editor of the small, international *Journal of Medical Primatology*. For the last seven years (10 percent of the life expectancy of an American male), I have been sued. So far, my legal expenses exceed $1 million. I underwent 14 days of depositions over a year and a half in this country and was ordered by the lower court to participate in extremely costly depositions in Austria and Sierra Leone. The seven years of proceedings consumed most of my time, curtailing my scientific activities.

Suppose the British rule had been in effect for Moor-Jankowski. Can one imagine that he and his insurance company would have carried on for seven years against that deep-pocketed plaintiff if they had had to consider the risk of paying Immuno's legal bills as well as their own?

In short, the fee-shifting system would make it harder for ordinary people, middle-class Americans, to stand up to the powerful in the courts as plaintiffs or defendants. Losing could mean bankruptcy. And, in fact, that is just the experience in Britain. Libel law there heavily favors plaintiffs—those offended, for example, by something said about them in a newspaper. But even with that legal tilt in their favor, few people of modest means dare bring libel suits. The reason was pithily stated by a New York libel lawyer, Eugene L. Girden, in *The Wall Street Journal*: "Up until now it's been almost impossible for a private person to seek redress under the English system because if you lose it's your head."

Those who would bring the fee-shifting system to American law, when tasked with the possible consequences to people of modest income up against rich plaintiffs or defendants, say that courts could establish ways to keep the rich from piling up huge legal fees to intimidate their opponents. We could, for example, install what the British call "taxing masters" to decide in each case the reasonable fee a loser would pay. But therein lies more complexity, more litigation, more burden. One can see the volumes of law reports filled with cases on what fees should be shifted.

Underlying the campaign for adoption of the British rule is the larger assertion that fanciful tort

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claims and exaggerated damages are hurting America's ability to compete in the world economy. On that question I am a skeptic. There have been some ludicrous lawsuits, reflecting the belief that we must have someone to blame for any mischance in life, and juries have awarded some outlandish damages. But the latest studies of medical malpractice—a field in which there are particularly strong assertions of outrageous legal decisions—have found that unjustified awards are rare, that most winning plaintiffs really have received grossly inadequate medical care.

Perhaps the United States does need to take some steps to curb the excesses of an occasional civil jury. But we should surely not rush to adopt a British system that may deny many Americans what we prize so greatly: the chance to seek justice in the courts. □

Charles Peters replies:

My point is that "loser pays" means fewer phony lawsuits and fewer phony defenses. Tony Lewis seems to be arguing that there will still be some of both because there will always be angry plaintiffs or defendants who, like Zuckerman or Immuno, are also wealthy enough to pay the other side's legal fees when they lose. He is right. But there will still be less litigation because reasonable men will not risk filing trumped-up claims that, if unsuccessful, are certain to leave them stuck with legal fees that are not now a factor in deciding whether to sue. Today, a plaintiff will file a phony suit when he thinks the defendant will pay that claim off to avoid the expense of paying his own lawyer. Thus, an insurance company might pay a $20,000 settlement to settle an unjust auto accident claim rather than incur a $50,000 fee from its lawyer for defending the case.

But if we adopted loser pays, the reasonable plaintiff would not even file the phony suit because he would know that he would have to pay the insurance company that $50,000 when he lost. Nor would a reasonable defendant prolong a suit with delaying tactics designed to run up the plaintiff's legal bills if the defendant knew he would have to pay that bill.

Lewis thinks some poor people with good cases will be discouraged by loser pays because they can't risk an unfair verdict or judgment against them, no matter how unlikely. This is certainly possible. But more plaintiffs and defendants with just causes will be *encouraged* because they know that the other side will have to pay their lawyers when they win, which they are likely to do when they have good cases.

Often legitimate claims are not made because there isn't enough money involved to pay a claimant's attorney a reasonable fee. If we adopted a loser pays system, defendants in the wrong would not only pay up, but they would pay up quickly in order to avoid incurring legal expenses of their own. The result would be more justice with less litigation.

Less litigation will mean speedier trials for legitimate causes—and remember, the Massachusetts speedy trial statute was the real basis for justice in the Manning case. Fewer suits would also achieve my major aim: reducing the need for lawyers in our national life. England, which has loser pays, has one-third the number of lawyers per capita that we do. We now have a total of 826,130 lawyers with 129,580 law students waiting to join them. I have called them the Typhoid Marys of the chronic paranoia that has become our national affliction. Lawyers foment this sense of victimhood—of "it's me against him"—and the terrible social fragmentation that accompanies it. Consider the antagonism they engender or exacerbate just in divorce cases.

I do not deny that there are some lawyers who are devoted to defending the innocent, prosecuting criminals, protecting precious constitutional rights, and advocating the cause of the Davids who take on corporate Goliaths up to no good. But they, I can assure you, number 100,000 at most. As for the rest, let's get them into such socially desirable occupations as teaching, entrepreneurship, and working in government. Better teachers in better schools could give deprived youth a fair chance in life. Better educators and more talented businessmen would make us more competitive in the global economy. And better government would help us deal sensibly and humanely with such pressing problems as the environment and health care.

I should emphasize that I do not support loser pays for one of the reasons cited by conservatives like Dan Quayle. They want to protect the corporate Goliaths from having to pay punitive damages for their misdeeds. In this regard, I follow West Virginia Justice Richard Neely, who said that punitive damages are needed "where the defendant is not just stupid but really mean." □

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Mr. Break-It

The not very reassuring past of Ira Magaziner, the brains behind the Health Care Task Force

by David Segal

One of the uglier power struggles that played out after Clinton's election was between two Friends of Bill from the Oxford years, Ira Magaziner and Robert Reich. They were natural rivals. Though they had been Rhodes scholars at the same time and had co-authored a book on industrial policy, both men felt best qualified to direct Clinton's economic policy. Both seemed naturals for the top spot at either Commerce or Labor, or as head of the Council of Economic Advisers. Both had the ear of the president.

Magaziner, according to insiders, moved first. Shortly after the election, he went to Clinton and, in one of the transition's more audacious lunges for power, asked for authority over health care *and* labor. "It was a flat out power grab," says a person familiar with the transition. "And it was disingenuous. Representations were made to a variety of people that there would be collaboration, and when he made the grab, he did it for himself."

But Reich exploited his F.O.B. status more ruthlessly. "He went to Clinton," remembers one campaign insider, "and said 'Look, I'm a friend of Ira's and it hurts me to say this, but he's just too radical.'" Reich's message dovetailed nicely with a number of reports that had been leaked into *The Wall Street Journal* and elsewhere tarring Magaziner as a central planner with an affinity for industrial policy. After Magaziner met with Clinton in Little Rock, he didn't hear from his soon-to-be boss for several weeks, time enough for Reich to Iago his erstwhile colleague. "Clinton and Reich were meeting a lot then," says another person familiar with the transition, "and he told the president that Ira's just a little bit far out for the center image that he's trying to create." When the dust settled, Reich was in the cabinet as secretary of Labor, and Magaziner had what sounds like a decidedly humbler tag—special assistant to the president.

Research assistance for this article was provided by Jennifer Elsea and Ann O'Hanlon.

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For all appearances, Magaziner had been outmaneuvered in his first big-league dust-up. But he, not Reich, is the central figure on the Health Care Task Force, which is about to unveil a plan to reform one-seventh of the nation's economy. And since Magaziner is not tied to a single portfolio, once health care is safely in motion, he'll be free to apply his talents elsewhere. As the administration's reform guru-at-large, don't be surprised to see him in New York a year from now, fixing the U.N.

For anyone familiar with his career, Magaziner's unique position is enough to make you, well, concerned, and the profiles published in the drum roll preceding the Task Force's plan—with the exception of the one in *Newsweek* last month—have tended to gloss or ignore what is worrying. His history in the private sector and his previous forays in government reflect a passion for bold strategic thinking and public policy of New Deal-sized grandeur. But what is left in the wake of his reformist zeal? The 500-strong colloquy he's now orchestrating may be too sprawling to bear Magaziner's imprimatur distinctly, but browse the standout chapters of his life and you get the sinking sense that if health care reform is anything like his past projects, it will be hopelessly complex, or impossible to sell, or simply ill-advised. And while we're waiting in line for blood tests and barium shakes, Magaziner will be off . . . fixing the U.N.

GE whiz

Magaziner's mind is legendary. He can synthesize pie graphs, streamline bureaucratic waste, and parse economic indicators like a one-man mainframe. He's focused to the point of absent-mindedness: Legend has it that he once unwittingly traversed a tarpaulin stretched over a hotel pool on the way to a meeting. And he's apparently impervious to exhaustion—when he tells aides to produce something "by four," they have to ask "a.m. or p.m.?" Those who don't know him well describe him as humorless, aloof, and arrogant. His friends contend he's just extremely shy and awkward. "He's not the 'hail fellow well met' type," says an acquaintance. "But he's tremendously warm and loyal."

With a wiry shock of black and gray hair and a complexion like chalk, Magaziner made his reputation storming company compounds, rattling executives, and rustling documents until dramatic solutions emerged. He won rave reviews peddling advice and spreadsheeting for corporate bigfoots like Corning Glass and A.T. Cross. He helped rebuild the consumer electronics division at General Electric and persuaded Volvo to venture into the luxury auto market, a move which helped rescue the company from oblivion.

But some of Magaziner's solutions have been longer on drama than wisdom. When GE was a client, he convinced the company to develop a new rotary compressor (the pump that cools air in refrigerators) rather than buy the item from foreign manufacturers. The result was an expensive, defective debacle. GE ended up recalling a million of the compressors, a measure that resulted in a $450 million pretax charge on earnings. Among Magaziner's more famous clients is the now-defunct Wang Corporation, the soon-to-be defunct Swedish economy, and two politically defunct candidates for president, Richard Gephardt and Michael Dukakis. A 1990 profile in *Boston Business Journal* opined that Magaziner's track record and phenomenal fees prove that in the consulting biz "it's not whether you win or lose but how much you pay the brain."

"It's funny," Robert Reich once said, "his insights are rarely startling. More often they are of the 'Why didn't I see that?' variety." Indeed, Magaziner's career consists mostly of rearranging things that are already there. Ever since he organized a labor strike at summer camp as a teen, it's been the same: Point to the institution and he'll overhaul it.

Take Brown University, the site of his first and perhaps most successful redesign. In 1969, Magaziner, then a junior, and a friend named Elliot Maxwell decided that the school's curriculum put excessive emphasis on grades and was over-larded with requirements. They drafted what was called the Maxwell/Magaziner Report and after a year of debate, the school's faculty adopted it with virtually no modifications.

What's still known around campus as the "New Curriculum" has proven to be wildly popular with students, and over the years, attempts to alter it even slightly have been repulsed with rallies and even death threats. In part that's because the plan made classes smaller and experimenting

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with new disciplines easier. But it's also because the Maxwell/Magaziner reforms, in their broad outlines, are what you'd expect if the guys from *Wayne's World* designed a university. They eliminated virtually every requirement, from language to mathematics, reduced the number of credits needed to graduate, and best of all, wiped out the D grade *and* allowed Fs to be stricken from transcripts. This system has naturally spawned grotesque grade inflation. Since Cs are essentially the school's failing mark, Bs can be had for little more than showing up.

Rethinking college curricula was all the rage back in 1969 (Robert Reich, in fact, was tinkering with Dartmouth's at the time), but today Brown students tell the story of the school's adoption of the Maxwell/Magaziner plan as if they were recounting the story of Exodus. Magaziner, cast as co-Moses, foments an uprising, holds massive rallies, and overwhelms an incredulous faculty.

That's partially true. But the biblical account airbrushes important details, some of which presage Magaziner's methods in future missions. This movement, like others he was to lead, did have some campus support but it was very much a top-down effort. "It was never any great grassroots cause," says Gerry Hausman, a classmate and friend of Magaziner's at Brown and later at Oxford. "If you had taken a poll in May of '68, I guarantee you would have found that reforming the curriculum was not among the top three issues in people's minds."

And though this reform got most of its credibility with faculty from the Maxwell/Magaziner report, teachers were also persuaded by something more primal: fear. The faculty found itself voting on the issue shortly after the student take-over at Columbia and while anti-Vietnam brushfires were starting at colleges around the country. The sense, according to Brown English professor David Hirsh, was that if they passed this plan, more violent explosions could be avoided. "We met inside this building and there were students outside the building with loudspeakers," says Hirsh, who supported the reforms. "Many of us were intimidated."

Essential also were a few key allies in the administration's upper echelons. And this is the last ingredient of a recipe that Magaziner would reuse in the future: Dig into a problem, imagine a way to fix it, hole up with others to write an exhaustive report on it, win powerful folks to the cause, and warn darkly of repercussions if the plan isn't adopted. It's not a coincidence that this, roughly, has been the tact taken by the Health Care Task Force.

Brown continues to draw in top students and thrive. But with the nation-wide ascendence of distribution requirements and core curricula, the school's system is starting to look thin and dated. Magaziner assumed that all students would be just like him and would put their freedom to responsible use. No doubt many do, but among Ivy-bound high schoolers and in colleges across the country, Brown is informally known as the four year vacation school. And it's hard to see how Magaziner, who is still proud of his work at Brown, can square the whatever-you-like spirit of the New Curriculum with what has recently been among his principal obsessions: the lack of standards in U.S. schools. He makes a good

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point when he argues that in the American system, "We don't have any quality control, we don't have a clue what we're getting for all that money that we're spending." But you can't help thinking that those sound like words you'd expect from the parent of a Brown student, finding out how the school's grading system actually works.

After Brown, Magaziner studied at Oxford on a Rhodes scholarship. He created his own course of independent study, never took a degree, and spent a lot of time organizing anti-Vietnam War rallies with, among other people, Vanessa Redgrave. In 1971, he resurfaced in Brockton, Massachusetts, the grizzled, decaying Boston suburb which was then a foundering shoe factory town best known as the home of Rocky Marciano. He arrived with a group of eight Brown graduates and devised a full frontal assault on the city's economy. They set up a tenants union, a land trust, ran a food co-op, and organized consumer rallies, all the time holding down day jobs and publishing a muckraking weekly newspaper, *The Brockton Examiner*.

Magaziner's curriculum is still wildly popular at Brown. In part that's because it made classes smaller and experimenting easier. But there's another reason: His reforms were what you'd expect if the guys from *Wayne's World* had designed a university.

What got the group truly exercised, judging by several *Examiner* issues from 1972, was development. One hobby horse was fighting construction of a low- and middle-income apartment building, which, the paper argued, would ruin the town's largest park. (The housing was built, the park is fine.) The *Examiner* took a hard stand against a proposal to build a Bob's Big Boy.

Luddite tendencies aside, the group did have some positive effects and enjoyed community support, but Magaziner seemed to lose interest in the project, and he and his friends neglected to train anyone to continue the work they had started. "I saw there was going to be a deplorable vacuum behind when they left," says George Papas, a Brockton community activist at the time. "And I asked them to make sure that they trained people. But they didn't, and the food co-op and the tenants union just withered away when they left."

By early 1973 Magaziner had left Brockton. "We were young and naive," he would later say of this utopian project. Magaziner was in his mid-twenties at the time and would shortly ditch the sandal-and-cloves crowd for the wing-tipped halls of the Boston Consulting Group. Though he spent the next decade and a half advising the Fortune 500 and a number of countries, when critics charge Magaziner with favoring the heavy arm of government over free enterprise, the Brockton project is part of the reason.

The rest of the reason is the Greenhouse Compact, drafted back in 1982 at the request of a former Rhode Island governor, Joseph J. Garrahy. It was an expansive, multi-tentacled program designed to grow (or greenhouse) certain industries in the state. Magaziner has been unabashed in calling the plan "industrial policy," and he made no secret of intending it to serve as a model for what could be done at the national level.

By then Magaziner was married with children and had set up Telesis, his own consulting outfit in Providence, Rhode Island. He put the firm's resources at the state's disposal for free. True to form, he put together a working group, came up with a densely written 1,100 page document—the executive summary alone runs 50 pages—and began to court the state's elites. His plan was to use local universities to identify which industries should be nurtured and which should be lured into the state with tax incentives and aid packages.

By the time the plan was unveiled, virtually everyone was on board: labor unions, church leaders, state legislators, bankers, the chamber of commerce, even the state's biggest newspaper. The only hold-out, ironically, was the entire economics department at Brown—and, as it turned out, 80 percent of the state's population.

The plan required the state to raise $250 million, which Magaziner insisted on packaging as a one time tax surcharge and putting to a state ref-

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erendum. But just days before the vote, the two leading Democrats in the state legislature named themselves to the ostensibly non-partisan commission which was to oversee Greenhouse dispersals. The venture capital fund suddenly looked like a pork barrel. Rhode Islanders, who know that, felon for felon, they've got the most corrupt state government in the country, saw what was coming and torpedoed Greenhouse. "We understood that these guys couldn't run the government efficiently," says Dan Shedd, president of Taylor Box, a manufacturing company in Warren, Rhode Island. "So how could they possibly direct an economy?"

Magaziner, who had put manic energy into devising the plan and selling it to leaders, had forgotten to sufficiently pitch it to taxpayers. As importantly, he had failed to insulate Greenhouse from the snake pit of Rhode Island politics. "One of the arguments used against Ira," says a transition insider, "was what happened in Rhode Island. People took it as evidence of a lack of political sophistication, that he didn't have a good enough sense of the hurly-burly." Not coincidentally, Magaziner has been the Health Care Task Force's ideas coordinator and traffic cop, "but James Carville is hovering nearby and Stephanopolous, [White House press liaison Bob] Boorstin, and Hillary are in charge of the public face."

Whether Greenhouse could have protected the state from the recession is still a matter of debate. There were strong hints that bio-tech and high-tech firms would be big winners, but some of what turned out to be the state's cash cows—like Hasbro, the toy company—would not have seen any Greenhouse funds, and the jewelry industry, which was identified as part of the problem, is still one of the state's largest employers. The perennial rap against industrial policy—that elites are no better, and might be a lot worse, at picking winners than the market—is still the rap against Greenhouse and, indeed, against Magaziner himself. He was, after all, an early and ardent fan of the ultimate high-tech boondoggle, cold fusion. Before scientists discredited the findings of two University of Utah scientists who claimed in 1989 to have created a new source of energy in a glass of water, Magaziner was testifying before Congress that the government should immediately sink $25 million into cold fusion research. (At the time, Magaziner was on a $20,000 a month retainer from the state of Utah.)

Train in vain

Magaziner sold Telesis for $6 million in 1988, and has since retired to front other civic projects and plump for one of his, and now the Clinton administration's, favorite themes: increasing productivity by creating a more highly trained work force. In a speech to the Economic Strategy Institute last May, he argued that the country should establish a national system of "performance based assessments" whereby children would earn merit badges by demonstrating competence in a series of skills, leading, ultimately, to a "certificate of initial mastery."

In 1990, he offered more specifics in a study he chaired for the National Center on Education and the Economy (NCEE), which persuasively argued for the need to increase the skills level of the American worker. The report recommended a system of federally sponsored employment and training boards to oversee a new system of school-to-work programs and skills certificates.

Most of the NCEE report was extremely trenchant, but it ended with a Magazineresque flourish, urging that *every* business, large and small, be required to spend 1 percent of payroll on training. "All companies, organizations and institutions, regardless of size or type of business. . . would be required to participate." An across-the-board rule has some merit: If smaller businesses are exempt, they can swipe skilled workers, which, in fact, is what happens in Germany now. But the no-exceptions approach is riddled with problems. It requires a network of watchdogs, since managers who want to duck the expense can easily cook the books to fake compliance. Sweden's system, touted as a useful model in *The Silent War*, a book Magaziner co-authored in 1989, is spared any additional bureaucracy because unions are powerful enough (95 percent of the workforce are union members) to police skills programs themselves.

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Magaziner's mandatory training idea, which you'll find in *Putting People First*, is also regressive: A big firm's outlay to train 50 workers is far more cost-effective than a smaller firm's outlay to train five. Other countries that have tried mandatory systems found that small companies opt out by the thousands and pay a tax rather than pony up for schooling they don't need. "In France, small firms punt rather than spend money on unnecessary training," says Laurie Bassi, associate professor of economics and public policy at Georgetown University. "They give the money to a general pool, which only ends up redistributing funds from small to large firms."

After two University of Utah scientists claimed to have created a new source of energy in a glass of water, Magaziner was testifying before Congress that the government should immediately sink $25 million into cold fusion research.

"Mandatory training," says Dan Hammermesh, a professor of economics at Michigan State, "is a wing and a prayer. It's just the hope that if we shake people up, the dust will fly and when it settles the results will be more desirable."

The 1 percent training requirement, Greenhouse, the "certificate of initial mastery," and even, to some extent, the Brockton project are all vintage Magaziner: right-hearted, impressive in scale, but tinged with heavy-handedness and impracticalities. Too often his schemes sacrifice pragmatism to ambition. Because, for instance, Greenhouse was intended as a pilot program for a national industrial policy, it gave bizarre emphasis to Rhode Island's "balance of trade": Goods traded with other states would be favored over firms selling within Rhode Island. The idea was that if Greenhouse could improve a state's export ratio, then the concept could be sold to the whole country as sound national policy. This, of course, is a vast disanalogy. Rhode Island can't use tariffs, doesn't control the amount of its currency and sends 12 percent of its workforce across state lines. And selling products in state is as good for the economy as selling them to Nebraska.

Though it has doomed past projects, Magaziner's love of the vast may be precisely what is necessary for a morass like national health care. But already there have been mutterings that when Magaziner takes the health care plan public he's in for the sort of surprise Rhode Islanders handed him. Not all the details have been vetted with Clinton's mandarins for political viability. Shalala is rumored to be a detractor and more leg-work may be necessary to win over others. "I wouldn't say that Bentsen is completely signed on," says an official at the Treasury Department. "There may be a subsidy arrangement for small business and individuals who need government help.There may be taxes on benefit values above a threshold. If so, Treasury needs to be in on the design."

In the long term, what Magaziner's presence in the White House will mean is not yet clear. The uncharitable will think that he'll nudge the Clinton administration to adventures in what Bush called "social engineering." The charitable will say that Magaziner's instincts are in the best tradition of FDR's impulse to *try something*. No doubt there's something to both notions, but Magaziner's intellectual pedigree, youth (he's now 45), and faith in the sheer wattage of his brain recall another place and time: the roundtable of Kennedy's best and brightest. Indeed, if the health care crisis in this country is, as some have predicted, the next Vietnam, Magaziner seems fated to be its McNamara. Both men were touted early on as brilliant thinkers, both enjoyed lucrative stints in the corporate world, both slid into public life as protegés of a new, young president, and both were unleashed on the day's most Byzantine problem.

An administration of big ideas needs a big ideas man, but you can't help noticing that if Magaziner *is* a social experimenter his petri dish just got a lot bigger. First it was Brown University, then it was Brockton, Massachusetts, then it was the state of Rhode Island. Now, finally, it is all of us. □

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MEMO OF THE MONTH

United States Department of State

Department Notice

All Employees: State — February 24, 1993

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PERSONNEL AUDIT REPORT (PAR) WORKING TITLES

With the current PAR Open Season underway (January 12–March 31), the issue of working titles becomes an item of consideration to those whose assignments are vague or non-descriptive. In order to clarify such assignments as "IROG" (international relations officer general), "detail," "reassignment," etc., an employee may request a more descriptive working title to be added. The working title is added to the PAR using a list of existing codes that correspond with certain titles. The list is purposely generic and as such cannot be all inclusive. Working titles neither include specific items such as a particular University or a particular congressional office one may have been assigned to for a given period of time nor do they include diplomatic titles, such as Counselor, First Secretary, Attache, etc.

Working titles are designed to clarify one's assignment, they are not designed to enhance it. Therefore, when one is the only consular officer at a small post it is not correct to use the working title of "section chief." This is true of other similar assignments.

An employee who wishes to have one or more working titles added to his/her PAR should submit the request to PER/EX/IM during the Open Season when returning the PAR, even if no other corrections are made. After the Open Season, requests for working titles should be made directly to PER/CDA/T&R, Room 2328. Included with the request should be a copy of the work requirements statement applicable to each assignment for which a working title is desired. Working titles will not be added without proper documentation.

Attached is a sample list of working titles which is illustrative of the types of changes that can be made. Questions regarding working titles can be addressed to Joann G. Alba, PER/CDA/T&R, 647-4049.

Attachment:

Sample list

Sample Working Titles

POST ASSIGN	POS SKILL	POS TITLE (working title)
Date	Secretary	Sec (COM)
Date	Int Rel Off Gen	Desk Officer
Date	Multifunctional	Senior Watch Officer
Date	Detail	Pearson Prog (Cong)
Date	Consular Affairs	Chief of Section
Date	Visa Affairs	Unit Chief
Date	Construction Engr	Project Director

Office of Origin: PER/CDA/T&R

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Just Say Nonsense

Nancy Reagan's drug education programs don't reduce use, but they do waste hundreds of millions of dollars

by Jeff Elliott

"I can't get caught in the middle here—I've got my job," the man whispers into the telephone, careful not to be overheard. "But I've seen data that this stuff doesn't make any difference at all." The "stuff" is an educational product sold by this guy's company. Is he peddling video games? Dumbed down textbooks? Nope: a Just Say No anti-drug curriculum taught in schools. Turns out that the effectiveness of the mantra of Nancy Reagan's first ladyship may be about as durable as a caffeine buzz.

In the past 10 years, drug education has become a $2 billion industry, with companies selling expensive teachers' seminars and anti-drug texts to schools across the country. At least $1.25 billion of that comes from federal block grants that schools can use for counseling, social work, and other "anti-drug" activities and paraphernalia—including posters, bumperstickers, t-shirts, and coffee mugs. At least an additional $750 million comes from local and state governments and corporate gifts. Money well spent if it keeps our children from inhaling, right? That's the catch: There's little evidence that these dollars do anything to keep kids from using drugs. It's a new alphabet soup, all acronyms for messages of abstinence: STAR, DARE, ALERT, and dozens more. The nation's schools have bought a bill of goods so large and so ostensibly worthy that it's difficult to acknowledge disappointing results. And the money, now that it's flowing, is subject to the oldest fact of bureaucratic life: Once a government subsidy starts, it's virtually impossible to shut down.

Since the early eighties, Just Say No courses—classroom sessions, usually about a dozen, held over a few months in sixth, seventh, or eighth grade, sometimes supplemented by community and high school events—have quietly become commonplace. These programs have produced exorbitant claims of success: "More than 25 million kids will be impacted by the highly successful DARE program," reads one glowing press release. "DARE's impact on reducing drug use among young people is well-documented by numerous studies."

Jeff Elliott is a northern California writer who covers science, health, and environmental issues.

Drug bust

That, of course, sounds encouraging; the only problem is that it's not true. Perhaps the best that can be said of the Just Say No ideology is that it makes parents and teachers feel better. A 1988 analysis published in the *Journal of Drug Education* found that although the sessions probably didn't keep kids away from drugs, they did reassure "parents that the schools are at least trying to control substance abuse among students." Meanwhile, a new University of Michigan study finds that, after years of decline, marijuana, cocaine, and LSD use is actually rising among eighth graders.

Consider Project SMART: Founded in 1981, SMART was one of the earliest Just Say No programs taught in junior high schools. The approach seemed valid: Once a week for 12 weeks, kids would be taught to resist peer pressure, interpret ads for booze or cigarettes, and practice saying no through role playing. To evaluate how well the program worked, the children were tested one and two years later. The first follow-up found children still doing well, at least in resisting cigarettes. But at the

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end of the second year, almost all positive effects had faded, and kids in the study were now smoking cigarettes and marijuana to about the same degree as those who hadn't been in SMART.

Worse, the evaluators lost track of more than 50 percent of the kids before the follow-ups were completed. As a result, one reviewer of SMART says, "Even the modest effects reported by the investigators are debatable."

But through the magic of statistics, these small gains have been translated into tremendous victories in the war on drugs. In an evaluation of one program, ALERT, 1.4 percent of the kids who had been in the class had tried marijuana within 15 months of completing the course, compared to 3.7 percent of the kids who hadn't participated—a difference of 2.3 percent. ALERT researchers, however, claimed a heartening 60 percent drop in marijuana use. Technically, they were right: 2.3 is about 60 percent of 3.7. And doesn't a 60 percent improvement sound so much better than 2 percent?

A better indicator of ALERT's success comes from a study by the Rand Corporation and the Conrad N. Hilton Foundation. The evaluators found that it had the strongest effects on kids that needed it least. Children who had puffed on just one or two cigarettes came out of the program with a strong distaste for *l'air de Marlboro*. While ALERT delayed many kids from trying marijuana and found modest effects on their use of alcohol, the benefits disappeared the next year. According to Dr. Phyllis Ellickson, the project's primary investigator, this shows that, "If you make even a little dent, it's hard to maintain it."

Cooking the numbers like this is not unusual. "Generally, the agencies that are funding the programs are also the ones paying for the evaluation," says Dr. Joel Moskowitz, principal investigator for the Western Consortium for Public Health, a nonprofit attached to the University of California at Berkeley and at Los Angeles. "There's a tendency by the evaluators to report back what they think the agency wants to hear rather than what's really going on. Nobody wants to be the bearer of bad news. It makes the program providers unhappy, and it makes the funding agencies unhappy. It puts enormous pressure on the evaluator to massage the data to produce positive results."

Another program benefitting from massaged data is Project STAR. According to Mathea Falco's enthusiastic 1992 book, *The Making of a Drug-Free America*, the nine-year old STAR program is "one of the most effective prevention programs in the country." STAR's results in Kansas City, for instance, did seem remarkable: an across-the-board, 30 percent drop in alcohol, marijuana, and cigarette use by kids. But when they tried to reproduce STAR in Indianapolis, the results weren't nearly as dramatic. In the most recent follow-up, Indiana children were only 3 percent ahead of average for cigarettes, and less than 1 percent for cocaine use.

No program, however, illustrates the folly behind Just Say No as DARE, the most widely taught program nationwide. Founded in 1983, DARE, which grew from an idea proposed by

Roman Genn

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then-Los Angeles Police Chief Daryl Gates, now reaches five million schoolchildren. Although the message it delivers is substantially the same as the others, this one is unique: DARE is taught only by uniformed police officers. Official DARE estimates peg the program's cost at $12 per child, which would make it the cheapest drug education program in the country. (STAR and its cohorts cost between $15 and $25 per child.) But how well does that $12 figure stand up to scrutiny? According to a Justice Department report, nearly 10,000 police officers have had the two-week DARE training sessions. Assuming officers are paid $35,000 per year (including benefits), that's at least $14 million spent for weekly salaries during training. And if only three-quarters of these trained cops are working for DARE half-time, the total would be over $125 million just for annual payroll. If these estimates are even close, DARE is easily the nation's most expensive drug prevention program. And more important, as even Falco notes, "DARE does not reduce tobacco, alcohol, or drug use," a conclusion other studies have reached.

Who pays for DARE? You, in part. The Drug Free Schools and Communities Act of 1986 requires that 10 percent or more of the state grants to governors go only to projects that include "classroom instruction by uniformed law enforcement officials" and meet other criteria met only by programs "such as Project Drug Abuse Resistance Education." There's nothing nationwide that meets these standards—except DARE. In the 1992 appropriation, its share of the pie came to almost $10 million. The rest of the money comes from city funds, corporate and private grants, and drug seizures, bringing in rivers of money to police departments to win public relations points in their jurisdictions and time off from more difficult crime fighting.

And while the managers of programs like DARE and STAR are eager to fill their coffers, no one is really sure what happens to all the drug education money once it trickles down to the schools. A California program, CADPE, tried to find out by making the schools accountable. Supervisors didn't expect the schools to prove the drug programs worked; they merely wanted to make sure the drug war money went to the right place. Administrators were astonished when schools asked if they could use the money for football teams and bus trips. The schools claimed these expenses were justified because they offered kids drug-free activities. CADPE held firm, demanding that they prove every dollar was spent as intended. It'll be worth it, CADPE told the schools, because we're in this for the long haul. They were wrong. Three years after CADPE kicked off, California red-lined it out of its 1992 budget.

CADPE had one advantage, however, over most Just Say No programs: At least it was evaluated. A 1988 review found that only 10 percent of 350 different school programs had been assessed at all. Evaluation is difficult work: Because follow-up takes years, many children are lost to researchers as families move away and kids drop out of school or fail to return questionnaires. In some studies, more than half the children are lost. Except for DARE, which is run by police officers, all school programs are presented by school faculty or health educators. We have no idea how well or how much of any curriculum is actually delivered. One isolated study found that less than 70 percent of the material was presented as intended.

Of course, some reviewers of Just Say No have tried in recent years to show that the emperor has no clothes. But the same federal dollars that pressure evaluators to put a positive spin on the results also pressure independent scientists—many of them dependent on research grants from federal agencies—to keep their opinions to themselves. And if they do have the courage to speak out, they need only remember what happened to their colleague, Dr. Michael Newcomb. Newcomb's 1988 book, *Consequences of Adolescent Drug Abuse*, had an innocent enough conclusion: There was, he wrote, no evidence that most people who experiment with drugs get hooked. But this was big news in the last summer of the Reagan administration, when "use" and "abuse" were synonymous. The story made the front page of *The New York Times,* and provoked a fierce, kneejerk reaction from parents' groups and White House officials which led Newcomb to believe that his federal funding was in jeopardy.

Up in smoke

In the muddle of Just Say No, one program seems to have succeeded: the High/Scope Curriculum, funded by the foundation of the same

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name. According to its most recent follow up evaluation, more than 70 percent of the inner city kids in the program stayed away from drug dealing compared to peers who hadn't participated. Even better, the benefits continued well into adulthood. And, amazingly, it isn't even a new breakthrough in dealing with troubled teens—it's a preschool project for children 3 to 4 years old that began in 1962.

What went right? It seems doubtful that preschool training would have much influence on behavior a quarter century later. One factor may have been the weekly 90-minute home visits from counselors who met with the children's parents. These meetings focused on the child's development—in essence, teaching parents how to parent. Another factor is the social and educational value of preschool. If high risk children start on an even footing with the rest of their classmates, they're less likely to drop out or slip into drug use. These explanations match the risk factors identified by Dr. Denise Kandel of Columbia University, who has studied the topic for 20 years. Kandel says that children's depression and poor relationships with parents are greater threats than peer pressure. Children who do well in school are less likely to be depressed, and better trained parents translate into a more stable home life for the children. The cost of such outreach now is staggering, unless a broad national service program were in place in which volunteers were doing the work on a large scale that the High/Scope did on a small one.

So what can we do about adolescent drug abuse? Ignore the problem? Jail every kid that sips from a can of beer? "I think the targets ought to be delay[ing use] and focusing on abuse rather than just focus on use. Most kids who try something don't get in trouble," says Newcomb, who is now a professor of counseling psychology at the University of Southern California. "We've got to deal with the bigger picture, with people's attitudes in general and not just drugs. The Just Say No program created a problem by oversimplifying it and acting as if there were a simple answer to the complex problem of drug abuse."

One alternative is called responsible use. Like the Just Say No approach, it does not condone alcohol, cigarette, or drug use by children. It differs in recognizing that most kids do experiment with some of these substances—particularly alcohol. Over 90 percent of adolescents drink before leaving high school. The no use vs. responsible use debate was part of a 1991 General Accounting Office (GAO) report that criticized the single-minded position taken by the government: "Current research evidence has not demonstrated the general superiority of one prevention approach over any other, nor have any evaluations isolated the effects of a no use approach." The GAO concluded that "the search for effective drug abuse prevention programs will be most effective . . . if their policies are broadened to permit review of any type of promising program." Some researchers readily admit they would like to junk the strict Just Say No dogma and incorporate the responsible use approach. "I think, to be honest, that's the only realistic approach—at least for alcohol," says Newcomb. "I don't think we can say there's responsible use of marijuana or cocaine. But alcohol is legal in society, and adolescents are probably going to use it at some point. Since car crashes with drunk teenagers are a leading cause of death for that age group, I think we're really missing the boat if we don't attack that realistically."

Realistic or not, responsible use is not a message that the feds want delivered. Department of Education guidelines demand a firm stance of "no illegal use of legal substances and no use of illegal substances." This eliminates many worthy organizations, such as SADD (Students Against Drunk Driving). Despite a proven record in reducing drunk-driving deaths, SADD's recognition that teenagers drink means it doesn't qualify for any drug war money. That ought to change.

So what's the solution? Schools—the paying customers—ought to hold the Just Say No companies to the fire, demanding genuine evaluations before investing money in curricula that are just going to absorb valuable class time and whose results go up in smoke. At the same time, state education departments which are doling out drug education money need to make certain the money's reaching the classroom and not financing, as it did in California, bus rides, ball games, and other boondoggles. Just saying no to ineffective educational gimmicks is one informed decision grown-ups ought to be making. □

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Wine and Poses

How a publicity-smart alcohol industry convinced Bill Clinton, "60 Minutes," and a lot of Americans that booze is good for you

by Ben Sherwood

It was the crowning moment of American Wine Appreciation Week. On February 25, a 42-person delegation from the Wine Institute met with President Bill Clinton just outside the East Room of the White House. The group of California winemakers had come to lobby against possible "sin" taxes on alcohol meant to help pay for the administration's health care reforms.

With flash bulbs popping, Wine Institute President John A. De Luca told the 46-year-old Clinton about recent medical research revealing potential health benefits from moderate alcohol consumption. Clinton interrupted, noting appreciatively that he had "reached the age that when all this health data comes out, I want to take another glass of wine. . . ." Before Clinton could even finish his sentence, the group erupted in applause. The president grinned, beating his chest, thump, thump, thump, like a healthy heart.

Several days later, the president sat for an interview with MTV News correspondent Tabitha Soren. Again, Clinton deflected talk of new taxes on alcohol by touting the benefits of drinking. "At least if you use it in moderation, there's no evidence that it causes harm," said the president, who drinks infrequently. "And there's some evidence," he continued, "that wine, for example, is good for your heart if you use it in moderation."

From the breweries of St. Louis to the wine cellars of Sonoma, the sound of popping corks and clinking glasses should have been deafening. After years of bad news about sagging consumption and inhibiting regulations, the $82-billion-a-year alcoholic beverage industry had reason to rejoice: A health-conscious president had endorsed—or come very close to recommending—drinking in moderation.

You might have expected Clinton's comments to provoke some protest. Each year, the federal and state governments spend millions combating alcoholism, alcohol abuse, and drunk driving. An average of 300 people die each day from alcohol-related causes. Alcoholism and related problems cost the nation between $86 and $116 billion a year. So the president's remarks about drinking might have been news.

The lack of outcry reflects the stunning success of the alcohol industry's shrewd campaign in recent years to repackage booze as health food. It is the ultimate rehab story: The slumping industry capitalized on legitimate research suggesting that small amounts of alcohol may protect a regular drinker from coronary artery disease and even have a prolonging effect on life. That message isn't wrong—it's merely a fraction of the truth. This is also the tale of a complex health issue involving perilous tradeoffs that has been oversimplified, sometimes recklessly, by a self-interested industry and an over-eager news media.

1,000 pints of lite

The eighties were not banner years for the alcohol industry. Average annual wine, beer, and liquor consumption fell from a high in 1980 of 42.8 gallons per adult to 38.9 gallons in 1989. Per capita annual consumption of ethanol—the substance that makes you drunk—dropped dur-

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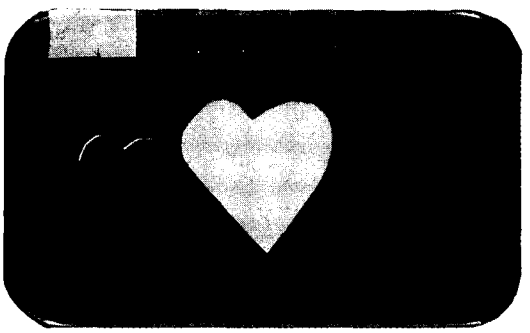
ing that period from 2.76 gallons to 2.43 gallons. By 1984, all 50 states had raised their legal drinking age from 18 to 21. Four years later, Congress mandated warning labels on alcoholic beverages. And the number of drinking Americans shrank. Today, a third of the population consumes 90 percent of all alcoholic beverages, while another third does not imbibe at all.

Faced with this dropping consumption the industry needed help. So it began exploiting an angle as old as wine itself: toasting your health.

The alcohol industry turned to a slew of studies dating back to the early seventies suggesting that moderate drinkers face a 25 to 50 percent lower risk of coronary artery disease or heart attack than nondrinkers. Wine (red or white) appears to be the best "medicine," but spirits and beer also seem to have a protective effect. Apparently, ethanol is what does it. The exact mechanism is unknown, but there are several theories: Moderate drinking may lower "bad" LDL cholesterol levels in the blood while raising "good" HDL cholesterol levels. Alcohol may decrease the stickiness of platelets in the blood that clog and block arteries. It may increase coronary blood flow and estrogen levels.



Drunk Jiving: One vineyard offers some not-so-subtle medical advice

"We don't have any drugs that are as good as alcohol," says Dr. David N. Whitten of the University of California at San Francisco Medical School, who worked briefly as a wine industry consultant. "There's nothing else that comes close" in reducing the risk of heart disease, he adds. "A little alcohol is good for you, a lot of it is bad," says Dr. R. Curtis Ellison, an epidemiologist at the Boston University School of Medicine, who has received funding from the industry. In a 1990 issue of *Epidemiology*, Ellison wrote a controversial editorial suggesting that American men who want to reduce their risk of heart disease (and who do not have a bleeding tendency and are not at increased risk of alcohol abuse) "might consider the advantages of washing down [their] aspirin with a glass of cabernet."

Over the past few years, the good news about booze spread fast. In *Mademoiselle*, Dr. Elizabeth M. Whelan, president of the American Council on Science and Health, noted that around two-and-a-half ounces of 80-percent proof alcohol a day can cut a woman's risk of dying of heart disease by 50 percent. Since the health benefits of aerobic exercise are well documented, Whelan, whose organization has received funding from the industry, was quoted saying "the best way to prevent a heart attack may be to run from bar to bar."

Supermarket tabloids caught on. In the *Sun*, a blowout on beer took top billing on the front page. Beer was described as a "magic elixir that fights diseases, aging and obesity. . . ." Besides preventing tooth decay and being "safer than water," the *Sun* article stated: "Beer is a treasure house of essential vitamins and minerals, and contains ingredients that fight cancer, high blood pressure, cardiovascular diseases, kidney stones and arthritis."

By February 1992, most Americans had gotten the message. According to a Gallup poll, after two years of decline, consumers appeared to be returning to drinking levels not seen since the mid-eighties. The poll also showed that 58 percent of Americans were aware of research linking moderate drinking to lower rates of heart disease.

Most of Gallup's 1,001 interviewees said they were not moved to drink by the news about alcohol and health, but consider what happened in November 1991 after "60 Minutes" aired a Morley Safer report on the so-called "French Paradox." The segment, produced by John Tiffin, examined possible explanations—including the consumption of red wine—for why the French, despite their fatty pâtes, rich sauces, and buttery pastries, have a lower rate of heart disease than Americans. It was 12-minutes-and-45-seconds, some say, that saved the alcohol industry.

"So why is it," Safer began, "that the French, who eat 30 percent more fat than we do, suffer

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fewer heart attacks, even though they smoke more and exercise less? All you have to do is look at the numbers. If you're a middle-aged American man, your chances of dying of a heart attack are three times greater than a Frenchman of the same age."

A well-known wine lover, Safer cited a number of dietary factors to explain the paradox. The most important of all, he suggested, was wine. Per person annual wine consumption in the U.S. (around 2.05 gallons) ranks among the lowest of any wine-producing nation. French per person annual consumption (around 19.55 gallons) is the world's highest. "There has been for years the belief by doctors in many countries that alcohol, in particular red wine, reduces the risk of heart disease," Safer said, adding, "Now it's been all but confirmed." For balance, Ellison of Boston University was interviewed, describing the health benefits of moderate drinking while soberly noting that "we're all very much aware of the tremendous problem of alcohol abuse." But the magic moment—the enduring image—of the "60 Minutes" piece was when Safer hoisted a glass of red wine and looked into the camera: "So the answer to the riddle, the explanation of the paradox, may lie in this inviting glass."

"60 Minutes" was the highest rated program on television that week, with an estimated 33.7 million people tuned in. And the next day, people began buying and drinking. . . heavily. On American Airlines, for instance, requests for red wine increased so dramatically that most flights couldn't stock enough bottles. In the month after the report, red wine sales in supermarkets jumped 44 percent over the same period in the previous year, amounting to a 524,000 gallon increase (equal to 2.6 million bottles). In July 1992, "60 Minutes" rebroadcast "The French Paradox" segment. Sure enough, red wine sales shot up 49 percent over the previous year. All told, red wine sales increased approximately 39 percent in the year following the initial broadcast.

For his efforts, Safer was honored in France with a special "communication" prize from LVMH Moet Hennessy-Louis Vuitton, the champagne, liquor, and luxury goods giant. There was even a report that a new wine would be named Safer Red. Asked about the frenzied reaction to his report, Safer claimed he was "a little uneasy . . . at the enthusiastic way the wine trade seized on the piece. Fortunately, most of the promotion was very seemly."

Not exactly. Despite a federal law which prohibits any representation that wine has "curative or therapeutic effects," many vintners did everything they could to capitalize on the report. Food and Wines from France, the French quasi-government operation that promotes Gallic products overseas, placed full-page ads in a number of newspapers. The ad noted that the French passion for fatty foods "seems to be counteracted by their drinking of French red wine. Yes, French red wine." It went on: "Moderate consumption of French red wine—one to three glasses per day with your meals—flushes away these platelets, clearing the arteries!"

Across the country, posters appeared almost overnight in wine shops, saying "YOU SAW IT ON TV. RED WINE reduces the risk of heart disease by as much as 50%! . . . DRINK RED WINE! TO YOUR HEALTH!" Beringer Vineyards of St. Helena, California, tried to sell wine with neck hangers—little bottle tags—that quoted the 60 Minutes program. Geyser Peak Winery of Geyserville, California, ran an ad that said: "As age enhances wine, wine enhances age." The Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, and Firearms (BATF) squashed the ad since it made an explicit therapeutic claim. Today, BATF, the Food and Drug Administration, and the Federal Trade Commission are preparing guidelines for alcoholic beverage industry advertising on the health issue. And the industry waits.

Wining and dying

So what's the problem with all this?

For starters, from all the press coverage, you might think the French eat all the wrong things and get away with it. Not true. In fact, heart disease is France's number one killer, accounting for 30 percent of all deaths. While alcohol may play some role, nutrition experts say there could be plenty of other dietary reasons for France's proportionately lower heart disease rate. The French, for instance, consume more vegetables, grains, and beans (high in healthy fibers) than Americans do.

In fairness, "60 Minutes" did mention other explanations for the "French Paradox." But the pro-

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gram left the clear impression that wine was the magic potion consumed by absolutely everyone—even kids. In fact, over the last decade, the number of French non-drinkers grew from 38.7 percent in 1980 to a majority of 50.7 percent in 1990. What's more, the French aren't exactly regular drinkers: according to a 1990 industry survey, only 28 percent of Frenchmen and 11 percent of Frenchwomen who drink wine do so every day.

" '60 Minutes' told the facts, but they didn't tell the whole truth," says Lawrence Lindner, executive editor of the Tufts University *Diet & Nutrition Letter*. Lindner notes that French men are three times more likely than their American counterparts to die of cancer of the esophagus and more than twice as likely to die of stomach cancer. Both cancers are linked to drinking. The French also die of cirrhosis and chronic liver disease at almost twice the rate of Americans. Of course, coronary artery disease is a far greater killer than these other illnesses, but Lindner believes drinkers should know the possible tradeoffs. 60 Minutes, he says, neglected to report that the French are at higher risk of dying in accidents (almost five times greater in the case of women) and suicides. Finally, France has a higher rate of alcohol abuse than the U.S.

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It's also not entirely clear that it's the alcohol in wine that helps the heart. Purple grape juice, for instance, contains more resveratrol—a compound in wine thought to lower cholesterol levels in blood—than many wines. And according to a recent University of California at Davis study, these non-alcoholic compounds (known as phenolics) may have an important anti-oxidant effect in the body that prevents narrowing of the arteries and the formation of blood clots. So non-alcoholic wine, grapes, grape juice, and raisins may be every bit as good for your ticker as a glass of Burgundy.

Second, there's the vexing problem of defining moderate drinking. With alcohol, one person's moderation may be another's disaster—the poison is in the dose. And a "moderate" amount is not easy to specify. The National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism (NIAAA) has tried: "Moderate drinking may be defined as drinking that does not generally cause problems, either for the drinker or for society." That's as helpful as the National Cancer Institute advising that too much sun is "sun that is too much for you."

Figuring out what *does* constitute moderate drinking can be treacherous. "There are tradeoffs involved in each decision about drinking," says Dr. Enoch Gordis, director of the NIAAA. "Reducing the risk of developing coronary artery disease, for example, may be offset by the risk of developing another alcohol-related condition." Despite President Clinton's comments on MTV, even small amounts of alcohol can cause harm. "Research shows," an NIAAA "Alcohol Alert" bulletin says, "that adverse consequences may occur at relatively low levels of consumption." Moderate consumption, for instance, increases the risk of strokes caused by bleeding (although it reduces the risk of strokes caused by blocked blood vessels). Driving skills can be impaired at 0.05 percent blood alcohol concentration (BAC) or lower, with rapid deterioration as the concentration rises. (A man weighing 140 pounds might attain the BAC level of 0.05 percent after two drinks.) Alcohol may interact harmfully with more than 100 prescription and over-the-counter medications. Moderate drinking may be related, if only remotely, to female breast cancer, and may be a risk factor in birth defects.

So what's the bottom line? From much of the media coverage and the industry's promotional efforts, non-drinkers might be encouraged to start drinking—when regular exercise, quitting smoking, losing weight, and stress management are clearer paths to better health. And those who already drink too much might rationalize their habit or addiction. What's more, people

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might easily misinterpret the news and continue eating unhealthy foods while trying to cancel the risk with beer or wine.

Sour grapes

The repackaging of alcohol as a health food also raises questions about the industry's motives. Naturally, industry spokesmen make the compelling argument that consumers should be given all the facts and make up their own minds about moderate drinking. "The bottom line is, do you trust the American people to handle this information?" says John De Luca of the Wine Institute. "Do you trust them with anything positive about moderate alcohol consumption?"

Though it's hard to argue with such logic, many believe there is a fundamental cynicism to the "moderate" or "responsible" drinking approach. "It's extremely subtle and very clever," says Dr. Ernest P. Noble, director of UCLA's Alcohol Research Center. "These are emotionally appealing but ambiguous phrases. They can mean almost anything one wants them to mean. They provide no guidance to the consumer as to who should drink, and when, where, and how much to drink." In fact, a study in the November 1992 issue of *The Milbank Quarterly*, a health care policy journal, found that recent moderate drinking campaigns undermine important public health messages and may encourage consumption. Studying the beer industry's "responsible" campaigns, the journal noted that "brewers have used vague slogans and other advertising strategies that fail to define 'moderate' drinking and have overlooked the fact that certain people should avoid alcohol consumption altogether." Even Dr. Arthur L. Klatsky, an Oakland cardiologist and pioneering alcohol-in-moderation researcher, says "it cannot be stated that alcohol generally is 'good for the heart' or 'bad for the heart.' Specific conditions and individual factors related to the risks of drinking must be considered for each person."

It's not entirely clear that it's the alcohol in wine that helps the heart. Grapes, grape juice, and raisins may be every bit as good for your ticker as a glass of Burgundy.

Only cranks and killjoys could quibble with the industry's position that well-informed consumers should make their own choices. It's when the industry starts prescribing alcohol that one has to wonder. Since higher excise taxes on alcohol tend to reduce consumption, the Beer Institute has argued that responsible drinking should not be discouraged at all because of the net *health* benefit to society. "There's probably more benefit from drinking moderately than there is a detriment from the abuse of our product," says Raymond J. McGrath, president of the Beer Institute, the industry's trade association. "We believe there's a net benefit to society which can be quantified."

While the Beer Institute tallies its numbers, the grim picture of alcohol abuse in this country is already well known. As many as 10.5 million Americans show signs of alcoholism or alcohol dependence and another 7.2 million show persistently heavy drinking patterns associated with impaired health or social functioning, according to the National Council on Alcoholism and Drug Dependence. More than 100,000 people die each year because of the misuse of alcohol. An estimated 35 percent of all hospital beds are occupied by people who are there because of alcohol-related problems. An alcohol-related family problem strikes one of every four American homes. Two out of every five people in the U.S. will be in an alcohol-related crash in their lifetimes. Alcohol is closely connected to the four leading causes of accidental death in the U.S.: auto crashes (about half are alcohol-related); falls; drownings (38%); and fires and burns.

And the list goes on. Sure, it might have been a swell party if we could all tipple our way to a longer, fitter life. But the Marin Institute for the Prevention of Alcohol and Other Drug Problems sums up the situation succinctly: "If you don't drink, there is no health reason to start." □

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The Promised Land Grab

Forget the settlements. Here's how Israel is really taking over the West Bank

by Deborah Horan

Palestinians routinely threaten to end peace talks over them; President Bush waxed livid about them; and Prime Minister Shamir defied the world by building a record number of them. Few issues in the Arab-Israeli conflict cause as much gnashing of teeth as Jewish settlements on the West Bank. And rightly so, because the housing now dotting the hills of what Israelis call Judea and Samaria promises to be among the thorniest brambles in any peaceful Middle East solution. But in the United States, the debate over who will build, how much, and where has so far overlooked a vital point: The actual economic and political struggle over the land begins not with the hammering, but when the Israeli government puts land under its control by declaring it "state land."

By conservative estimates, well over 2 million square kilometers (or dunams) of land in the West Bank were declared Israel's state land in the first 20 years of occupation. (There are 5.8 million dunams in the West Bank.) Today, as much as 55 to 60 percent of the West Bank is state land. Because land that has been taken by Israel cannot be used, lived on, or farmed by Palestinians, these declarations make the land Israel's; settlements merely drive the point home.

Prime Minister Rabin may have scored political points by announcing the end of "political" settlements (only those necessary for security are to be built), but by all accounts the accumulation of state land has continued unabated under the Labor Government. Declarations initiated under Shamir are proceeding in the Israeli military court and new ones are being issued. In fact, six weeks after the Rabin government was elected, 1,000 dunams of land were confiscated from Aboud, an Arab village, for the expansion of an Israeli settlement called

Deborah Horan is a Boston writer.

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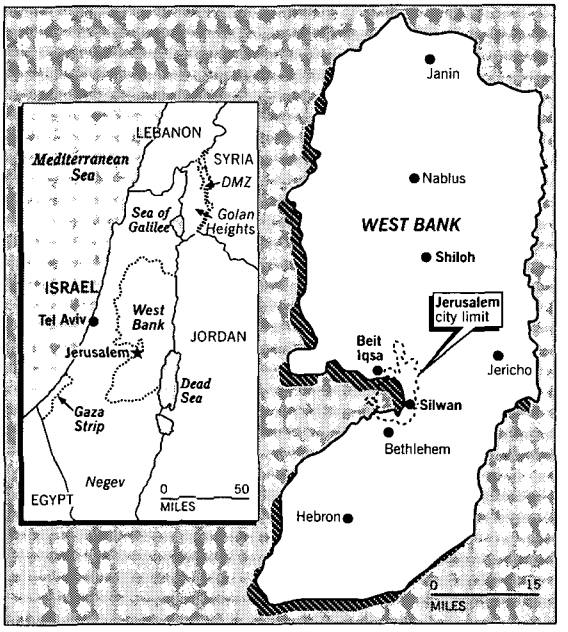
Efraim. Civil Administration spokeswoman Alyce Shazar summed it up: "There hasn't been any order to stop declarations of state land since Rabin took office."

The Israeli government actually goes through a painstaking process to ensure that land it takes is not already privately owned. Using maps and aerial photography, the Israeli Supervisor of Government Property in the West Bank combs the area looking for acres that appear uncultivated and without buildings. Then a notice is placed in Arabic newspapers informing villagers what land has been taken by state declaration. Alternatively, an Israeli government official is dispatched to point out the land in question to the *mukhtars* (elders) of the villages who, in turn, inform the villagers. Anyone who thinks he has a claim to the property has 45 days to file an appeal with the Israeli military court.



It sounds fair. But, according to Ministry of Justice lawyer Plia Albec, Israel begins with the premise that any land that it takes is state land; the burden of proof is on the Palestinian to prove the land is theirs. This burden is usually too onerous because registry systems used by countries previously in control of the West Bank were about as arcane as Deuteronomy. Tabous, land registration papers left over from the pre-World War I Turkish Mandate, are often difficult to decipher. The boundaries of the property described in them are often designated by landmarks that no longer exist, and occasionally a tabou describes boundaries as extending from one person's property to another's, when both owners have been dead for decades. "Even if you have a tabou, it's a big problem to prove that this tabou goes with this land," said Taofiq Jabarin, an attorney in Jerusalem who represents Palestinians challenging state land declarations.

Turkey got out of the West Bank after World War I, and Jordan, which controlled the land until 1967, was wretchedly slow about registering property claims. In the years that the Hashemites ruled the West Bank, one-third of land owners were able to secure documentation. The process stopped under Israeli occupation in 1968, when Israeli military order 291 effectively suspended land registration indefinitely.

The system that Israel now uses to notify Palestinians of land declarations also creates problems. The Israeli Ministry of Government Properties rarely attaches maps to confiscation notices showing the boundaries of what has been declared state land. The most plausible explanation is that the Israeli government does not want to shell out funds for surveying fees. But when submitting their appeal, Palestinians *are* obliged to attach a map demarcating ownership boundaries. That usually means they must hire an attorney and a surveyor—a costly and time consuming task that contributes to missed deadlines and dissuades Palestinians from appealing in the first place. The upshot is that Palestinians are often unsure about what land is in question, and they either submit an appeal for the wrong plot or fail to submit an appeal at all.

The situation is even more difficult for the many Palestinians without registration papers. Often they're living on land that has been in their family for generations, but which they never legally owned. Under the Turks, they paid taxes to a landlord and were deemed de facto owners of the land once they had cultivated it for ten consecutive years. Israel says it respects this system and is careful not to take cultivated property.

But travails begin when, for instance, a Palestinian family has considered 100 dunams surrounding their house to belong to them, but cul-

The Washington Post

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tivated only 50. Or a Palestinian might think 30 dunams belong to his family, but may derive income from a source other than farming, and therefore cultivated none of it. On the legal level, the differences could be boiled down to this: The Palestinians believe the land is theirs because their grandfathers considered it so, and the Israelis want to see papers that prove it.

It is difficult to learn the precise number of individual declarations issued since Israel took over the West Bank after the 1967 War. A government spokeswoman said no statistics were available on how many plots of land have been taken, nor how many of the declarations were contested by Palestinians—or whether these appeals were successful. Plia Albeck estimates that Palestinians have appealed hundreds of declarations and lost roughly 95 percent of the time.

The obstacles to successful appeals make many Palestinians feel that the whole state land declaration system is set up to hem them in and limit the amount of land controlled by Arabs. This theory is fueled by the many state land declarations issued in the process of determining borders of Palestinian villages in the occupied territories. Similar to zoning in the United States, outlining a village means delineating the village boundaries, as well as zones for residences, commerce, industry, and public plots. The Israeli government uses aerial photography to determine where these boundaries should be, based on where residents are already most concentrated. Once the lines of a village have been drawn, the land outside it becomes state land and off-limits to Palestinians. Outline planning is underway in over 200 villages and towns and has already been completed in 200 others, according to Alyce Shazar. Though Palestinians outnumber Jews on the West Bank by close to ten to one, Arab residents are now effectively barred from living in or cultivating at least half of the area.

Piece process

The taking state of land is not an Israeli invention; in fact, it happens in Arab states throughout the Middle East. But when the Syrian government, for instance, makes piecemeal acquisitions in Syrian villages, there is little disputing that the land is Syria's. On the other hand, the West Bank, by Israel's own definition, is not Israel's.

So is the Jewish State trampling the norms of international law? Like every question in the Middle East, it depends on whom you ask. Israel says the occupier can use state land as long as it does not "change the face" of the land which, it claims, it never does, because only land which is not privately owned is taken. Palestinians argue that private land *is* often declared state land and that taking public acreage *does* change the face of the land by not allowing Palestinians to use it.

What's not disputed is that as occupier, Israel does not own what it takes. To circumvent the illegality of flat out selling land to settlers, the Israeli government offers them 49-year leases. This way the government has not sold something it does not own, and it can argue that settlements are temporary until negotiations determine permanent ownership.

Regardless of whether you think this deal is a raw one for the Palestinians, it certainly complicates life for the Israelis at the peace talks. Because the land is still technically controlled by Israel, not the settlers who build on it, if the Labor government handed over parts (or all) of the West Bank to the Palestinians, Arabs would instantly become controllers of land now inhabited by Israeli settlers. Imposing Palestinian landlords over Israel's most zealously anti-Arab citizens might at first seem like a cruel joke. But such a prospect is certain to impede Israel's latitude in making far-reaching concessions on the West Bank.

Although not the focus of the media or prominent Palestinian delegates during press conferences—Palestinian delegate Ziad Abu Zayyad said his colleagues prefer to focus on settlements because they are visible and permanent—land ownership and management will be on the negotiating table when peace talks resume. One Israeli plan would give Palestinians and Israelis joint control over state land. But Palestinians fear that joint control will not mean equal power. They say that any solution arrived at in negotiations with Israel must give them enough clout to stop the declarations and allow them to control existing state land. Whether they'll get that much clout remains to be seen. But until the rules of the game change, Rabin may have found a way to do what Shamir could not: increase Israel's share of the West Bank without incurring international condemnation. □

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Courtesy MTV

Mock the Vote

What's wrong with MTV's hot new political coverage

by Christopher Georges

"Thank you, MTV!" gloated Al Gore, in front of 4,000 of America's most connected at MTV's Inaugural ball in January. "Thank *you* for winning this election. You did it!"

Even during that week of inflated rhetoric, Gore's 30-second MTV love-in wasn't much of an exaggeration. After all, hadn't MTV's year-long crusade of election specials inspired America's jaded youth to unplug their Sony Discmans long enough to tune into campaign '92? Hadn't the music station's funky get-out-the-vote drive prompted nearly a million young voters to register and thousands to volunteer for the campaigns? Hadn't MTV helped make politics hip again? Of course it had. Indeed, the new vice president—in fact, all of America—had much to be thankful for.

And for all that, MTV is now being toasted—even with a prestigious Peabody award for its campaign coverage—as the spunky new kid on the political block. Of course, the music station is still a political lightweight compared to the networks and Beltway pundits, but a worthy sidekick—one they're happy to have tag along.

So what's so troubling about MTV's foray into politics? Actually, it's no one thing—not just the size of MTV's audience nor just what

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MTV presents—but, like mixing harmless nitrogen with harmless glycerin, it's the combination that's created a political hazard. What exactly is that mix? Consider, first, that the music station boasts one of TV's largest audiences—about 2 million viewers weekly and about 20 million annually, outdrawing, for example, even some of CNN's news coverage. Add the fact that MTV—although it denies it—provides this massive audience with news that is obviously slanted to the left. Then consider that this slanted, widely seen news reaches an audience that is by all accounts politically malleable and detached from news sources other than those on TV. Take into account that this influential, widely seen, slanted news outlet has dedicated itself to becoming over the next few years the number one news source for America's 45 million 18- to 29-year olds. Finally, factor in that this influential, widely seen, slanted, growing music station has become such a political bigfoot among politicians that President Clinton held his first national interview not with Ted Koppel or Tom Brokaw, but with MTV's Tabitha Soren.

The upshot: Despite what the over-50 Washington insider crowd wants to believe, MTV is arguably one of the most influential political players in the American media—but it's only playing half way. If MTV is going to profit from the perks that come with playing in the big leagues—such as wielding the power to influence the opinions of millions of Americans—shouldn't the network bear the responsibility of playing fairly? Of course, the music station and the VJs who run it have the *right* to be biased, but they also have an obligation: Either provide news coverage with an agenda and *admit* the bias, or claim a standard of fairness and live up to it.

Yet, far from being held to any standard of responsibility, or taking it upon itself to stick to one, MTV news is treated gingerly—even exalted—by the political pundits and the usually frothing media watchdog groups who, for the most part, seem oblivious to the extent of its impact and bias. The media watchers, explains Jon Katz, media critic for *Rolling Stone*, "are out to lunch. Apparently they're too busy poring over every line of the op-ed pages to notice MTV."

MTV's defenders retort that characters such as Rush Limbaugh and Pat Robertson also bring an agenda to their large audiences. But the comparison's a leaky one. MTV's audience, after all, is more ideologically diverse and more easily influenced. And unlike Robertson or Limbaugh, MTV's claims of providing objective reporting have gone virtually unchallenged by media watchers and the mainstream press.

Of course, MTV insists that its 18 daily news reports and nearly 20 in-depth political reports and specials aired annually are as objective and non-partisan as what the networks and the major

(Above) Little Rock star: Candidate Clinton holds pre-election forum
(Top left) MTV political correspondent Tabitha Soren and protégé

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dailies dish out. As evidence, MTV news director Dave Sirunlick points out that the network's election coverage—which included lengthy candidate profiles and interviews, eight nights of convention reports, and features on issues such as abortion, the economy, and the environment—offered equal time to Bush and Clinton, did not endorse candidates or specific legislation, and even carried reports of Clinton's draft and Gennifer Flowers fiascos. That's true. But anyone—even the most avid Clinton supporter—who watched more than a few minutes of MTV's political coverage this past year would have trouble making the case that MTV's reporting was even close to objective. "Clinton walked into a dream," says Katz, referring to MTV's coverage. "He would have to have worked hard to mess that up." MTV's slant may be to a certain extent subtle, but its message is also unmistakable to its under-30 audience. A few examples:

● A news report on the New Hampshire primary opens with grainy, black and white video of Bush: "For pure political reasons," Bush says, "I need the help of the people." The tape cuts to a young woman: "I went yesterday to register to vote because I want to make sure he doesn't get re-elected." Then to Bill Clinton, addressing a crowd: "Together, I believe we can make America great again. . . ."

➤ MTV political correspondent (and rapper) M.C. Lyte reported from outside Madison Square Garden during the Democratic National Convention: "This is what was passed on the platform," she says, reading an excerpt from the Democratic party platform. "'Democrats stand behind the right of every woman to choose.'" "All right!" she adds, waving the paper excitedly, "We're starting somewhere. We're getting somewhere!"

● MTV toyed especially with Dan Quayle. In one case, background music from the song "Shiny Happy People" by the group R.E.M. was edited onto a clip of Quayle delivering a speech. To the casual viewer, it's simply background audio, but to anyone who watches enough MTV, the message is clear: The popular music video of the song features colorfully dressed children and adults in a silly, arm-waving, happy-go-lucky frolic.

● MTV's four minute profile of Clinton was generally positive, and offered a balanced mix of the candidate's successes and failures. But consider the four minute feature on the Bush record. The opening 25 seconds featured none other than Quayle; Soren narrates (over video of the potato-e incident and other shots of a generally goofy-looking Quayle): "George Bush's first major decision that would shape his presidency was choosing his vice president . . . During the next four years, Quayle bloopers would become more well known than anything else about the man." The next 30 seconds are spent skipping through foreign policy events (the fall of the Berlin Wall, the end of the Cold War), leaving the rest of the piece to detail in succession: Bush breaking his no new taxes pledge, the recession, Bush failing to spur employment, Capitol Hill gridlock, the Los Angeles riots, Bush's six vetoes on access to abortion, his broken promise to create 30 million new jobs, and the fact that Bush "took a lot of heat at the Earth Summit in Rio." Towards the end of the spot, Soren takes a stab at some balance, saying Bush "focused more attention on education," but she quickly adds, "without delivering much in concrete reforms."

➤ An MTV news primer on the Republican candidates opens with photos of Pat Buchanan over music with the lyrics "stereotype, stereotype," then moves to photos of Bush, with the singers now repeating the word "monotone." (The primer for Democratic candidates, on the other hand, opens simply with upbeat music and no lyrics.)

➤ At the Democratic convention, a typical interview, in this case conducted by MTV floor correspondent Dave Mustaine, a member of the rock group Megadeth: The reporter asks a young woman, an Ohio delegate, "How do you feel about Al Gore getting onto the ballot?" "It strengthens the ticket immensely," she responds, enthusiastically. "He's got strong character. He's been a leader in his state. He's got real commitment to family issues." Over at the Republican convention, Soren opens the first night of coverage with an interview with "Tracy" from the "Women's Action Coalition" outside the convention hall: "It's imperative that we bring out the fact the Republicans have been horrible

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about women's rights," Tracy says, "horrible about the poor, horrible about health care. And it just has to change." To MTV's credit, it did run lengthy features from both conventions allowing the protestors outside the convention halls a forum. Unfortunately, the protestors featured in both spots were almost exclusively knocking the same person: Bush.

● Even MTV's choice of convention correspondents betrayed a claim to objectivity. Among young people, MTV's Democratic convention correspondents—Mustaine and Lyte—are widely perceived as articulate, politically astute, and respectable. The station hired Mustaine because "he's a very smart guy who knows his stuff," explains Mike McCurry, a former Democratic National Committee official who worked as a political consultant to MTV during the campaign. (Hmm.) In contrast, MTV's Republican convention correspondent, Ted Nugent of the heavy metal group Damn Yankees, is not exactly, by MTV standards, a model of hip. Choosing Nugent, an icon of seventies' heavy metal, who conducted his on-camera dialogue while chewing on what appeared to be a foot-long piece of straw, is the equivalent of, say, ABC News selecting New York financier Abe Hirschfeld as its floor correspondent. Nugent, an avowed Republican, "is the guy you pick if you want to make a joke of right wingers," explains *Yale Daily News* editorial page editor Michael Crowley, who says he watches about an hour of MTV a day. "Just putting him in front of a bunch of Republicans makes you realize how stupid Republicans are." Even McCurry admits Nugent's reports were "pretty goofy stuff."

What isn't goofy, however, is the number of people this kind of reporting reaches. Each of MTV's daily news reports is viewed by up to a million people—matching and even occasionally topping the viewership for, say, CNN's evening news. The slick, often snide, five-to-ten minute reports, each of which contains about 30 percent political news, visit any issue MTV thinks will pique its young viewers' interests—from reports on the Los Angeles riots to the fall of the Berlin Wall.

MTV's real wallop, however, comes from its political specials. Eight million people, for example, tuned in to the highest rated of MTV's nearly 20 campaign specials (each of which was rebroadcast several times). That's nearly *four times* the number of people who watched CNN's six-hour, award-winning election special "Democracy in America." During its August 1992 "Choose or Lose Voter Registration Telethon," MTV logged more than 100,000 calls in a two hour period; tens of thousands of young people reportedly volunteered for the Clinton campaign in the days following MTV's Clinton specials; and in a post-election poll of 18- to 29-year olds, 12 percent said that MTV's coverage directly *influenced* their vote. (Considering that 22 million 18- to 29-year olds voted, and considering that Clinton won by 5.5 million votes, the president could, with a straight face, tell the MTV Inaugural ball rockers, that "MTV had a lot to do with the Clinton-Gore victory.") Of course, Clinton's success in winning the young vote also had a lot to do with his ability as a campaigner, but the MTV factor can't be underestimated: "MTV may not have been *the* reason why Clinton won this age group," explains MTV consultant McCurry, who worked for both the Dukakis and Babbitt campaigns in 1988 and who was recently named a spokesman for the Clinton State Department, "but it certainly had a lot to do with it."

The media watchers, explains Jon Katz, media critic for *Rolling Stone*, "are out to lunch. Apparently they're too busy poring over every line of the op-ed pages to notice MTV."

That's a message the Democrats had little trouble absorbing. "With all the press requests that came in for one-on-one interviews," says Ginny Terzano, who served as a senior Democratic party press official during the campaign, "we made sure

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we made time for MTV. We wouldn't replace Jennings for Soren, but it was close."

But the numbers explain only part of MTV's influence: For MTV, respecting the standards of journalistic fairness that the rest of the mass media lives (and dies) by may in fact be more important than for the networks and major print press because of *who* is watching MTV. The music station's millions of viewers are, after all, of a generation that admittedly pays little attention to—and places even less faith in—the more traditional news outlets. Fifty percent of those under 35, according to a recent Times Mirror Center for the People and the Press survey, say they rely *solely* on TV for their political news. And the news they do watch is, more and more, from sources like "Entertainment Tonight" and MTV. (Just 18 percent of the audiences for ABC, CBS, and NBC's evening newscasts, for example, are under age 30.) All of which means that "MTV, because it is essentially writing on blank slates, has a disproportionate influence," says Andrew Kohut, director of the Times Mirror Center for the People and the Press.

To MTV's credit, it did run lengthy features from both conventions allowing the protestors outside the convention halls a forum. Unfortunately, the protestors featured in both spots were almost exclusively knocking the same person: George Bush.

That influence is even further magnified because young people rarely view MTV with the same skepticism as their parents view, say, Dan Rather. While the news anchors at the Big Three and CNN may be trusted, they're not, to their viewers, exactly the embodiment of vogue. MTV, on the other hand, is. (The music station's repeated airing, for example, of a video by the Seattle rock band Nirvana last year was central to helping boost sales of the group's first album to 5 million copies, making it the hottest act of 1992.) There's little question that millions of young people, many of whom are becoming more politically active, rely on MTV to help them decide what's hip and what's not. And, as anyone raising a teenager can tell you, pop idols like Madonna have at least as much impact as teachers and parents on how young people act and think. "The issues they promote play as cool issues," explains Crowley. "When you watch MTV, you can't help but know that pro-choice is cool or that Clinton is cool."

And why is MTV so intent on making Clinton and a left-leaning agenda appear so cool? Could it be that Soren, Sirunlick, and the rest of the twentysomethings who staff MTV's New York studios are the Tom Haydens and Abbie Hoffmans of the nineties? Perhaps. But there's a less high-minded possibility. MTV is above all an entertainment company—and a very successful one at that. It's not only one of cable television's most profitable networks, but one of the world's fastest growing. And as part of multibillion-dollar Viacom International (which also owns the music station VH-1, Showtime, and Nickelodeon), it's part of an industry where audience share and entertainment value—as opposed to sense of newsworthiness or fairness—essentially drive programming decisions. This emphasis on promotion creates a reasonable, and accepted, financial formula: If you can sell the Red Hot Chili Peppers, or "The Ren & Stimpy Show" (a cartoon featuring a moronic cat and a hairless chihuahua—one of whom regularly spits up hairballs and both of whom apparently suffer from digestive disorders), do so. Even MTV's rock news is largely promotional material—tidbits that keep the names of the stars in front of the viewers. So if Bill and Al can boost audience share, why not sell them too? "It wasn't exactly an attempt to be politically correct that drove their coverage," explains one Wall Street media industry analyst, "but marketing."

But Clinton and Gore are not Ren and Stimpy. Of course, the politicians certainly couldn't object to being marketed as hot new products, but should they be? MTV is so sure the answer is yes that the

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music station will be doing more—much more—of it in the future. The network, according to MTV officials, plans to become "a full-service network" for the under-30 crowd. This primarily means expansion of news and documentary coverage; in upcoming months, for example, says MTV's Sirunlick, the news division plans to tackle topics such as the administration's national service and summer jobs programs, and it may even eventually open a Washington news bureau. "MTV," notes *Rolling Stone*'s Katz, "could well be the primary source of communication for people under 30. With the built-in audience they've now got, the only question is how much they want to expand."

None of this, however, seems to faze the media watchdogs and mainstream press. Why? For one, explains *The Washington Post*'s media critic Howard Kurtz, "Just about everyone who has written about the new MTV campaign coverage hasn't seen much of it. It's partly generational and partly because we don't have the time to watch it." In fact, most inside-Washington political analysts and media critics eagerly admit they haven't given a whole lot of thought to MTV's political coverage. "That stuff drives me up the goddamn wall," says *Baltimore Sun* columnist and TV pundit Jack Germond. "I wouldn't watch it if you paid me." (In a random survey of 20 Washington political pundit-types—from Michael Kinsley to George Will—just two, *Washington Post* editorial writer E.J. Dionne and *New York Times* political correspondent Maureen Dowd, said they even occasionally tuned in to the music station.)

But however rarely the pundits watch MTV, the professional media watchdogs—on both the right and the left—watch even less. "We regard MTV as entertainment," said a spokesman for Accuracy in Media, bringing our conversation to an abrupt end. And, from a somewhat confounded spokesman for the Center for Media and Public Affairs: "I didn't know MTV had a news program."

While the pundits and media watchers may be confused, MTV isn't. Peabody and accolades in hand, there's no reason it should abandon its winning formula. But selling Bill and Al was easy. Here's a real challenge: selling Ren and Stimpy in '96. □

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WHO'S WHO

Bruce Babbitt, the secretary of the Interior, is said to have been left out of the loop when the White House decided to cave on the issue of grazing fees and mining royalties. The president says he would have lost the votes of five Western Democratic senators if he hadn't surrendered. Knowledgeable observers like California Rep. **George Miller** think **Clinton** could have negotiated a compromise that would have salvaged more of the reforms he had proposed. . . .

A revealing nugget about the new president's style was buried in a long story by **Thomas Friedman** and **Elaine Sciolino** of *The New York Times*: "Another thing that strikes all foreign visitors is how Mr. **Clinton** alone conducts meetings from the American side, while his aides seem rather intimidated. His secretary of State and national security advisers speak only if called upon by the President." . . .

In 1973, **Bernard Nussbaum**, now the White House counsel, worked with **Hillary Clinton** on the staff of the House Judiciary committee when it was considering the impeachment of **Richard Nixon**. One night as Nussbaum was giving her a lift home, she told him about her boyfriend whom she described as a young lawyer who planned to become president of the United States. . . .

The health industry is making sure its lobbying firms have lots of FOBs and FOHs on their rosters of partners and associates. The **American Hospital Association** has engaged **Beryl Anthony**, the former Arkansas congressman. **Johnson & Johnson** has retained the **Wexler Group**, which recently hired **Betsey Wright,** who was **Bill Clinton**'s chief of staff when he was governor and who, like the firm's head, **Anne Wexler**, has been an FOB and FOH for more than two decades. . . .

There was quite a contrast between **Bill Clinton**'s involvement at the beginning of the Waco crisis and at the end. *The Wall Street Journal*'s **Jeffrey Birnbaum** disclosed that Clinton got sufficiently involved in the details of the operation on opening night to direct that Bradley fighting vehicles be kept out of sight to avoid inciting more violence. At the end of the 51-day standoff, however, Clinton seemed at first to try to avoid leaving his fingerprints on the final tear-gassing decision. . . .

The big problem, observers contend, with **Hazel O'Leary** as secretary of Energy is that she knows nothing about nuclear power or nuclear weapons, two of the department's thorniest responsibilities. A similar bit of miscasting may have occurred with the appointment of **Madeline Kunin**, whom many thought was ideally suited to head the Environmental Protection Agency, to the No. 2 spot at the Department of Education. . . .

D.C. City Council Chairman **John Wilson** recently had an aide call *The Washington Post* to complain about a description of his attire that had appeared in the paper's Style section. The aide said that Wilson had in fact worn a single-breasted **Giorgio Armani** tux, black suede **Ralph Lauren** shoes, and black silk Armani boxer shorts. She called back to add that he had worn Lauren suspenders. She then made a third call in which she said that for an event later that evening, Wilson wore his *double*-breasted Armani tux, **Gucci** footwear, and a "Free D.C." T-shirt. . . .

Who poisoned **Bill Clinton** on **Harold Ickes**, who was slated to be White House deputy chief of staff until his appointment was derailed in January? The suspects, according to the *New York Observer*'s **Charles Bagli**, include **Mario Cuomo**, **Rudolph Guiliani**, and **John Gleason**, a federal prosecutor who led the investigation of **David Dinkins** for whose mayoral campaign Ickes had served as counsel. Bagli's story contains convincing evidence that one charge against Ickes—that he had lied to a grand jury—is false. This leaves the undisputed fact that Ickes served for eight years as counsel to Local 100 of the Hotel and Restaurant Employees International Union, which during that period was allegedly controlled by two Mafia families. Clinton is said to be awaiting the results of the investigation of the local by a court appointed monitor. That's bad news for Ickes since the probe probably won't be concluded until 1994. . . .

Don Wilson, the former archivist who signed the order giving **George Bush** exclusive access to the computer records of his presidency, hired a lawyer to defend himself against allegations that his action might have been influenced by the prospect of a job at the Bush library. His attorney, **Fred Fielding**, is one of Washington's great experts in how to escape indictment even when seemingly caught red-handed. In 1972, Fielding supervised the break-in of **Howard Hunt**'s White House safe as part of the Watergate cover up. Fielding not only avoided prosecution, but was the beneficiary of benign neglect by *The Washington Post*. This has led some Watergate afficiandos to wonder whether Fielding was **Deep Throat** himself or at least a major source for **Bob Woodward** and **Carl Bernstein**. Perhaps it was just a coincidence, but a few years later a "Who's Who" source attended a small party at **Ben Bradlee**'s at which the guests included Woodward, **Katharine Graham**, and Fielding. . . .

—*Susan Threadgill*

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Gasoline Allies

The oil companies and the billion dollar swap meet

by David McKenna

Noticed anything odd about gas stations lately? It's not just that those men with the stitched-in-script name tags who used to top off the tank then buff the windshield have vanished; or that there are fewer fill'er-up-and-get-a-Flintstones-mug promotions. The more subtle—and more ominous—change is the disappearance of brand choices throughout the country. Chances are that there used to be ten or so brands to choose from in your neighborhood; now there could be as few as three. And soon enough, three may seem like a veritable buffet.

Turns out that while we've been busy pumping our own, the oil companies have been quietly engaged in a large-scale, multi-billion dollar swap meet. Some of the deals:

➤Chevron and Exxon jointly announced late last year that they would swap retail gas stations in the Washington, D.C. area and South Florida. Under the agreement, which is scheduled to be finalized June 30, 1993, Chevron will obtain 59 Exxon properties in Broward, Dade, and Palm Beach Counties, and Exxon will acquire 66 Chevron sites in Maryland, Virginia, and Washington, D.C.

When the deal takes effect, Chevron will become the top marketer in South Florida, up from its previous position of number four. Exxon's presence in South Florida and Chevron's in D.C. will be effectively zero. A few months before that agreement was announced, Exxon declared it would withdraw from Los Angeles, a Chevron and ARCO stronghold.

➤In 1988, Mobil received 330 BP stations in mid-Atlantic states and New England in exchange for 244 of its outlets in western and northwestern states.

➤ARCO abandoned the entire eastern U.S. in 1985; Sun acquired more than 550 ARCO outlets in the northeast in 1988.

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These deals would be no more worrisome than McDonald's swapping a few stores with Wendy's but for the odd relationship between wholesaler and retailer in the gas business. The mark-up on a gallon of gas is in most cases a matter of cents, even half cents, so individual stations have little latitude with their prices and not much hope of undercutting competitors down the street. Thus, Big Oil's home offices essentially set the price you pay at your local station and, as the number of available brands in an area dwindle, the companies get a firmer grip on that price. If present trends continue, your local gas station will have all the competitive advantages of a public utility—minus the regulation. Unlike a Wendy's-for-McDonald's deal, which would leave lunchers with plenty of options if Big Macs got too dear, drivers are stuck with whatever choices the oil companies offer.

The oil industry's trade association says all this swapping is nothing to worry about. "We don't follow those types of deals," said Joe Lastelic, a spokesman for the American Petroleum Institute, after the Exxon/Chevron swap. So far the government has felt the same way; for technical and not very convincing reasons, the Justice Department has allowed Big Oil's divide and conquer scheme to progress virtually unimpeded. But already one consumer group and a whole lot of gas station dealers are sounding the alarm and trying to stop what looks suspiciously like the beginning of a brand new oil monopoly.

Mobil stations

In the early seventies—before the major companies lost ownership of crude oil installations to the governments of the Mideast and elsewhere—it wasn't odd for a refiner to blanket the United States with outlets. Texaco, for one, used to boast that it marketed in every state in the continental United States. A couple of years after the arrival of OPEC, President Carter began deregulating the oil industry and soon the government subsidies, which had kept the pump price of gas low, were gone. Without those subsidies, the oil companies were left looking for ways to reduce red ink in their retail segment.

The strategy of isolating refiners and retailers in discrete regions makes good business sense. Consolidation, of course, means that refinery-to-station shipping costs are reduced. These deals also provide a short cut to an increased market share, eliminating the zoning and other logistical headaches that would otherwise be posed by building new gas stations. Ask the industry about the swaps and you'll get a perfectly sensible answer. "We can enhance our position in Florida and increase our profitability with this move," said Chevron spokesperson Bonnie Chaikind about her company's swap with Exxon. "We're not a big presence in the mid-Atlantic."

No doubt consolidating is good for the bottom line, but one of the morals of the Standard Oil breakup was that what's good for Big Oil isn't necessarily good for the American consumer. Some aspects of these deals smell rather suspect. It seems, to begin with, less than coincidental that all the major players have picked different sections of the country to do their consolidating. And it's slightly unnerving to learn that Citizen Action, a D.C.-based watchdog group, found in a 1991 study entitled "Destroying Competition and Raising Prices: How Big Oil Has Taken Control of America's Gasoline Markets" that all the oil companies' cost-cutting measures have yet to translate into lower gas prices.

In spite of the sums involved in these deals, the government has done virtually nothing to block them. The Justice Department has never intervened or stopped an oil company swap or divestiture because, in their view, these deals don't violate anti-trust laws. And although the Federal Trade Commission (FTC) keeps abreast of movement among the industry's major players, it has acted thus far only in cases where an oil company's wholesale facilities or refining outfits are included in the deal. When Chevron sought to acquire Gulf in 1984, for example, the FTC opposed the takeover until Chevron agreed to divest interest in a refinery.

FTC attorneys maintain that even in markets with relatively few competitors the enterprise of individual dealers will keep competition alive. "When Shell sells gas to dealers," says FTC attorney Art Nolan, "one is better at servicing people's cars, another guy is on a busier street and lowers the price because of a gas-and-go operation. There is competition."

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Nolan would have a point except the rules of the oil game are rigged to give companies the kind of power over retailers and their prices that other business folk can only dream about. Unlike the jewelry industry, for instance, where mark-ups are upwards of 50 percent, even high volume gas dealers don't have the flexibility to dramatically raise or lower prices. They are able, in fact, to shave just fractions of pennies off the gallon, a cut which is unlikely to change the buying behavior of even the most budget-minded drivers.

And dealers with even this modest price flexibility are getting rarer as more and more dealerships are purchased by oil companies. Today, about one-third of all gas sold comes from stations that are owned and operated—as opposed to merely franchised—by oil companies, and more are being bought every year. According to dealer advocates, Chevron has tripled the number of company-ops in its southern California fleet in the past three years.

By law—the Robinson-Patman law, to be specific—an oil company is required to offer all franchised dealers in a particular market the same price. But the pricing laws governing a company's sales to its company-operated stations aren't so clear—which means companies *could* sell gas through the stations they own at prices that put franchised dealers out of business. Indeed, franchised dealers have long accused the companies of undercutting them, and a number of cases around the country now in court will determine whether this practice is legal.

When the oil company is not the station's owner, chances are good that it has another sort of leverage: It's the station's landlord. Typically, an Exxon dealer leases from Exxon. And virtually every retail dealer is obliged, by contract, to sell only the gas his station is identified with. Exxon dealers, for instance, can only sell Exxon gas.

The oil companies, not surprisingly, have fought hard to keep this one-brand-per-retailer arrangement intact. In 1990, after an uncharacteristically successful lobbying effort by gas retailers, the Virginia legislature passed what was viewed as a landmark bill containing several pro-dealer provisions, including one that would allow retailers limited freedom to sell more than one brand of gas. An "open brand" provision would, of course, give oil companies an incentive to keep prices low because retailers would be allowed to shop around with other major companies and with the now rapidly shrinking field of independent fuel suppliers. The Virginia edict, alas, never went into effect. After the majors threatened lawsuits, Governor Douglas Wilder vetoed the open-brand provision in the bill.

Finally, keeping the many details of this sweet arrangement in place are regulatory realities, particularly environmentally stringent—and expensive—underground storage tank standards that all but prevent new players from entering the petroleum marketing game.

ARCOleptic

The current marketing landscape has gotten a nifty nip and tuck since the realignments commenced. These days, Texaco no longer brags of being a national marketer: By 1992, the company had pulled out of 28 mainland states. In the mid-eighties ARCO abandoned the East, and now actively markets in just five states: Arizona, California, Nevada, Oregon, and Washington. All the moves have left companies holding a dominant retailing hand in certain regions. According to the *Lundberg Survey*, an industry publication that monitors market penetration, ARCO is the number one marketer in every state it's in except Arizona. Amoco's hold on Missouri and Kansas and Conoco's commanding presence in Colorado are nearly as tight.

Citizen Action found no evidence that consumers are getting gouged by the refiners' regional shenanigans. Instead, taking a cue from John D. Rockefeller's methods in establishing Standard Oil's monopoly at the turn of the century, the oil companies have been accused of occasionally and briefly selling at artificially low prices in certain markets. Such predatory pricing is designed to low-ball smaller independent companies out of existence in the same way supermarkets have all but eliminated mom-and-pops from their industry. When a major supplier leaves the area, it reduces the opportunities for a dealer to switch brands, something that can be used as a bargaining chip in lease negotiations.

Franchised dealers, naturally, are howling. Largely as a result of testimony presented by

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dealer advocates late last year, the Senate Judiciary committee advised federal courts to start applying stricter scrutiny to the antitrust implications of the oil companies' market migrations.

Should the courts begin to heed the Congressional directive, certain dealers in California might be the first to benefit. Last year, 55 retailers sued Exxon and Chevron over a proposed swap involving 133 outlets in the state. The plaintiffs in the case have won a temporary injunction preventing the transaction at least until their suit is heard. Though the restraining order was granted on issues relating to station leases, the complaint filed in the case does charge that one reason the swap should be voided is that it will facilitate Big Oil's efforts to divide U.S. markets in violation of federal antitrust statutes. Attorneys representing dealers are preparing a similar suit to stop the Florida/D.C swap on the same grounds. No case involving this type of conspiracy allegation has ever been decided in the oil industry.

The plaintiffs in the California case, which is now in the discovery stage, hope that they'll be able to show at trial that the majors have been going about their business far less independently than they've admitted. But Jim Daskal, counsel for the Service Station Dealers of America, which is supporting the plaintiffs in that litigation, confesses that all his side has to go on now are the market shifts themselves.

"Obviously, we'd like to find a 'smoking gun' that would indicate that all these moves are part of a plan, as opposed to natural market evolution," he said. "Certainly, the opportunity for the oil companies to formulate a plan has been there. But the question is, are we going to be able to find the evidence of such a plan?"

Until someone in government decides the petroleum marketing scene needs closer scrutiny, the inter-company back-scratching will go on. And the ultimate impact of that could be a retailing environment that neither dealers nor their customers will find favorable. If the doomsdayers are right, the days when there was a whisper around town about where to buy the cheapest gallon of gas will soon be behind us. And it's going to get harder and harder to tell whether that extra pinch at the pump is President Clinton's energy tax or Big Oil's profits. □

The Washington Monthly

JOURNALISM AWARD

FOR FEBRUARY 1993 IS PRESENTED TO

James Allen Flanery and David Hendee
Omaha World Herald

It makes sense that if a doctor injures a patient, the physician should be reported to state health officials, which is why 49 states have such laws on the books. But not Nebraska. And the state's five-member medical oversight commission (made up entirely of doctors), charged with handling complaints about poor medical care, not only has no office and no staff, but no telephone. These are among the nearly dozen findings reported by Flanery and Hendee in their two-part series illustrating how Nebraska's toothless system of regulating doctors promotes incompetent or negligent care. While Nebraska isn't the only state where medical oversight is sloppy, its problems rank among the nation's worst. So lax is Nebraska's medical regulatory system that one physician was sued for malpractice 18 times in 13 years without facing a single state inquiry into his practices.

The Monthly Journalism Award is presented each month to the best newspaper, magazine, television, or radio story (or series of stories) on our political system. Nominations for any newspaper, magazine, or radio or television station in the country are welcome. The subject can be government in its federal, state, or municipal manifestation. Please send nominations to Monthly Journalism Award, 1611 Connecticut Ave. NW, Washington, D.C. 20009. Two copies of the article or broadcast text should accompany the nomination.

Nominations for stories published or aired in May will close June 15. The winner will be announced in the September issue.

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TIDBITS & OUTRAGES

COMING SOON: THE STANLEY KAPLAN OBEDIENCE SCHOOL PREP COURSE

New York magazine reports that a company in Manhattan trains dogs to pass condominium admissions interviews. Customers include Matthew Broderick, Mariah Carey, and La Toya Jackson. "I wasn't going to be approved unless the board met my dog," said one client, whose pet was sent for lessons once a week for three months—at a cost of $1,800.

STOCKMAN REDUX

At a conference attended by many of the key American and Soviet figures of the Cold War, a former Reagan secretary of Defense, Frank Carlucci, announced that he "never believed" in Star Wars.

AND ALICE MAYHEW IS EDITING ALL OF THEM

Three different books will be published this year about "Gilligan's Island."

"GENERAL, OUR MISSILES ARE VEERING OFF COURSE AND HEADING TOWARDS DETROIT!"

The federal government okayed the sale of a computer company, Applied Magnetics Corporation, to a Japanese firm without realizing that Applied Magnetics was the only American source for a key component used in the Army's Patriot and the Navy's Trident missiles.

"IN CASE OF AN EARLY VERDICT, CALL ME AT THE LOUVRE."

While the city of Los Angeles was trying to prepare for any disturbances that might result from the Rodney King trial verdict, Mayor Tom Bradley was on a two-week, $250,000 taxpayer-financed trip to Europe. Bradley said the purpose of the trip was to promote tourism and described his travel schedule as "grueling."

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Class Dismissed

Universities should start caring about how well—and how much—teachers teach

by Jon Meacham

One day in the mid-eighties, during a course in philosophical ethics at the University of North Carolina that had randomly featured movies about the Chilean labor movement, political screeds about Central America, and chats about local news, the professor dutifully handed out forms for students to rate the class.

"This had just been a very unremarkable course," recalls one student. "What we talked about in class wasn't connected to what we read, and the movie wasn't really connected to anything. And, when he distributed the forms, the professor announced, very matter-of-factly, that whatever the students said would have no effect on his career."

The professor was right. A scholarly publishing star, he soon left to chair the philosophy department at one of the country's largest research universities. He's there now, presiding over an academic Olympus, while the undergraduates whom he unremarkably taught a few years back are probably as long forgotten as the janitors who cleaned his office. That he wasn't a particularly good teacher didn't interest the universities which courted him. So long as the professor wrote books and presented professional papers, that was good enough. And in a way, that's fine. Complaining that research scholarship is antithetical to the university is silly, an argument that belongs to people who take George Wallace's caricature of "pointy headed professors" literally.

The real issue is why universities have let research become the alpha and omega of their culture. Because good teaching is simply assumed, the present system of professorial evaluation allows bad teaching to go undetected and unremedied. This means that professors who do well in the public sphere of publication rise to the top, leaving teaching stars in a professional steerage class.

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So why is there so little emphasis on teaching? According to the Carnegie Foundation, just 58 percent of faculty in four-year schools say their chief interest lies in the classroom; since 1969, the percent of faculty agreeing that teaching should be the primary criterion for promotion fell from 78 percent to 62 percent.

The rules of the academic road have followed those sentiments: Since the seventies, average faculty workloads have dropped from 15 class hours a week to about 6, and college costs have risen at five or six times the rate of inflation. Semesters are shorter, classes fewer. On average, full professors make $65,000 for about 90 minutes of class time a day for the eight months a year that school is in session. Not a bad deal at all.

And, significantly, professors who teach the least make the most money. A new study from the National Center on Postsecondary Teaching, Learning, and Assessment finds that professors who spent fewer than six hours a week in class made $50,927, stomping on colleagues who made $36,793 for 12 hours of teaching. The best-known and highest-ranked professors teach sporadically, if at all. In other words, the reward for scholarly success is time *away* from students.

When professors do teach, there is little sense of how well they're doing it. And when teaching *is* evaluated, the results are often overlooked. What's lost, of course, is a simple thing called education—the thing students and parents and taxpayers are writing checks for. The disturbing levels of American collegiate academic achievement are well-known: Our college graduates read and know mathematics at a lower level than their counterparts in other industrialized countries, and, in 1989, a National Endowment for the Humanities survey found that half of college seniors couldn't identify the Emancipation Proclamation or *The Federalist Papers.*

If any other business—an auto manufacturer, a bank, a supermarket—cut services and raised prices, customers would walk out. Universities, however, occupy an inviolate place in American life. Since the GI Bill made higher education a broad right instead of a privilege in the years after World War II, a university degree has been our intuitive engine of social mobility.

The engine's chief operators, the professors, like all other respiratory mammals, respond to systems of reward and sanction. Right now, the rewards are in research, and there are no significant sanctions for bad teaching over the years. Young academics swiftly pick up on that and tailor their careers accordingly. "The message in graduate school is, 'If you want to get ahead, focus on publishing,' " says Robert Speel, a young political scientist at Penn State's Erie campus. Curiously, too, Americans train their college teachers by forcing them to do labor-intensive research projects, and then expect them to emerge, after years in Ph.D. darkness, as engaging teachers.

Cultural change only comes in times of stress, and the conditions which cause stress are growing in higher education for the first time since 1945. Professors who took Ph.D.s—the wonder credential—and began their careers in the sixties are retiring; William Bowen, the former president of Princeton, projects that 153,000 new arts and sciences faculty will have to be hired between now and 2012—a virtual 100 percent replacement rate for the 156,000 professors now at four-year institutions. And the number of people seeking a Ph.D. is not keeping pace with expected enrollments. It's an opportune time, if there ever was one, to cut through the credentialist kudzu and recognize that not every good teacher is good at research, and not every good researcher is good at teaching.

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Why do we pretend otherwise? For one thing, when it comes to pay and promotion, it's easier to count publications than assess teaching. Though the results of undergraduate surveys are published in student course guides at Harvard and a handful of the largest state universities, they are frequently undervalued by the institutions themselves. "Schools always say, 'We have a file on every teacher,'" says Patrick Callan, executive director of the California Higher Education Policy Center in San Jose. "But when the tough decisions come around, like tenure and promotion, teaching still doesn't count for much."

Goodbye, Mr. Chips

How to assess classroom performance? For starters, ask the students. Measured over time, student evaluation is an invaluable resource. Too often, however, the formulaic questions ("Was the professor well-organized?") are too soft to extract critical information. Formal interviews with students and tough questioning are obviously in order, but it's extremely rare to find evaluation that requires any faculty participation, as interviewing would of course have to do. According to a three-year study published in 1993 by the North Carolina Center for Public Policy Research, only half of the nation's academic departments use peer evaluation. The American Association of Higher Education estimates that 70 percent don't review course materials.

That lassitude provides cover for a multitude of teaching sins. At a graduate school at the University of Mississippi, for example, one teacher uses a lit overhead projector, a machine that displays material printed on clear plastic sheets on a screen for students to read. This man whisks the sheets on and off the machine so quickly that students, despairing of copying down things like biochemical purine ring formulas, try to calculate the professor's TPM rate—transparencies per minute. The record is seven; the average is usually five. "So every 10 seconds or so, he's whipping off the sheet that's chock full of information," says one student. "Sometimes, when he slaps the sheet on the machine, it will slip off. But, instead of putting it back on, he just tosses it in the out pile." Without formal review and meaningful sanction, stories like these pass into student legend instead of getting corrected.

North Carolina's university system is fairly typical of the large institutions where a third of all American college students are enrolled. While 99 percent of North Carolina's departments use student forms, only 45 percent ask for self-evaluation; 30 percent have peer review; 26 percent review a teacher's course assignments, syllabi, and tests; and one department in the state—*one*—conducts exit interviews with graduating majors, presumably the most knowledgeable sources available. Oversight for tenure and promotion decisions is vastly more stringent than the evaluation full-time faculty get after they are permanently appointed—a moment which usually falls when a professor is 38 or 39. That leaves three decades or so of general unaccountability.

Even when evaluation forms are circulated, they often get filed with little review. "Routinely, I think chairmen fail to look at them," says Ted Leinbaugh, a tenured professor of English at North Carolina's Chapel Hill campus. What is reviewed is research. At North Carolina, for example, every March or April, full-time professors submit a report to their chairman detailing annual scholarly activity to be assessed for salary increases. "In my experience, teaching is not explicitly mentioned," says Leinbaugh. "There's a temptation to measure production, and it's easier to measure publications."

A few years ago, Leinbaugh won a three-year distinguished teaching award that paid him a bonus of $5,000 a year; after the award expired, the university didn't give him a permanent salary boost. Another winner of that teaching award makes $40,000; the median for his rank in the English department is $60,000. Publishing scholars are more likely to win the university's endowed chairs, marks of professorial distinction which are held for life. The teaching awards, however, run out. And it's significant that one of the fastest growing segments of the nation's academic labor force is in "non-tenure track" jobs in which temporary faculty do the bulk of the teaching—but aren't rewarded with full, permanent status.

Research is of course important, but that doesn't mean it can't be combined with good teaching. In Ohio, one campus has a plan in place that merits a serious look. At Ohio Univer-

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sity in Athens—a 19,000-student school with 16,000 undergraduates—there's a flexible way to figure salaries. If a physics professor, for instance, wants to be judged more on teaching, his annual salary can be computed 60 percent for teaching performance, 20 percent for research, and 20 percent for service instead of the more familiar 40/40/20 formula. For each course the professor teaches, students fill out evaluations, usually 13 questions to rate different factors from "poor" to "excellent"; a salary committee assesses all the evidence, and a final rating is computed. Raises run from 3 percent to 7 percent. That's the system's carrot. The stick? If the department doesn't attract students, the state denies it new positions and money. By asking faculty to be realistic about how they spend their time, Ohio is doing more than mouthing quality control bromides—it's forcing teachers to decide where their best effort will repay them financially, and students benefit from teachers whose salaries are tied to the classroom.

It's one of the curiosities of the American university that a degree earned by writing dissertations on things like "oligopolistic structures" in political science or "Anorexia in Dickens" is required to teach young people.

For teaching to become important again, reputations built on publishing scholarship and research grants will have to be recast to showcase teaching, a tougher sell. Instead of building sports and fitness centers, alumni ought to endow teaching chairs and bang the alumni highchair for low student-faculty ratios and pay scales commensurate with teaching ability. And parents and alumni need to cultivate a keen sense of reverse snobbery. Snobbery, after all, pushed us into this. The press for research is really the press for prestige, something legislators, alumni, and parents covet as much as professors do. In fact, accreditation and foundation funding depend, in part, on the percentage of faculty with doctorates, the number of research grants won, and how many graduate students departments can attract.

Solutions more radical than declaring good intentions are needed, beginning with how teachers are trained. It's one of the curiosities of the American university that a degree earned by independent research—dissertations on "oligopolistic structures" in political science, for example, or "Anorexia in Dickens" (both real topics from recent years)—is required to teach desultory young people. This isn't a new complaint. Jacques Barzun, the wise Columbia professor and dean, called the ranks of the Ph.D. "the most expensive and least luxurious club in the world." He went on: "The doctorate of course shows nothing about teaching. After seeing degree holders and reading their theses, it is hard to say what the title shows." That was in 1944.

No question, the aspiring research chemist or literary theorist reasonably wants to immerse himself in a Ph.D. program for six years to prepare to write or experiment throughout a career. But we're curiously wedded to the idea that a Ph.D. is the central prerequisite to teach, not just research. That's mostly because World War II and Cold War defense research drove science faculties to require advanced degrees, and the impression quickly developed that all faculty had to be treated uniformly. "A research degree, which is what we all have, doesn't say anything about how you might teach," says James Shinkle, a professor of biology at San Antonio's Trinity University.

By definition, of course, a good teacher keeps working in his field, reading widely. But why the pressure to *produce* arcania? "There's an obvious distinction between those who are breaking new ground with original research and those who, under pressure to produce anything,

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digest and regurgitate other people's original research," says Daniel Cheever, the former president of Boston's Wheelock College and president of the American Student Assistance Corporation. "But academe doesn't make that distinction."

Ph. Doldrums

And there's no sign the university is even interested in such distinctions. "I'm not being trained to teach anything, even in my speciality," says one doctoral candidate in the humanities at Northwestern University. "I am being trained to come up with increasingly outlandish ideas. Because these topics, even in something as broad as literature, have been gone over so relentlessly for so long, you end up pulling your hair out to find the tiniest niche possible." In a lot of ways, the Ph.D., because of its coursework and the depths candidates have to plumb, has a salutary effect, at least in making the young teacher confident he knows his stuff. Not everybody needs that formal training, however, and right now, because of university and union regulations, there's no way around it. Except, of course, to bury blind credentialism and base college hiring on ability and general scholarship, not hyper-specialization.

It's not as radical as it sounds. Such a system worked here two generations ago, and even later at Oxford, where as recently as the sixties a B.A. graduate who took a "first"—the Oxonian equivalent of *summa cum laude*—could get a fellowship, the English equivalent of an assistant professorship. If a candidate who hadn't taken a first wanted to impress a college, he did what used to be called a Bachelor of Letters, a limited research degree, to prove his intellectual stamina. And it was simply assumed, both at Oxford and in the American university, that these bright young dons or professors would, under their own power, keep up with their fields.

In 1968, Barzun made a proposal: Do away with the dissertation and instead judge a candidate's writerly scholarship with his undergraduate senior thesis or master's thesis. Already, master's degrees are occasionally awarded by examination only, a convention that demands student accountability without extracting a tortuously long paper. If the bachelor's or the master's degree results from rigorous work, the Ph.D. is of increasingly dubious value. Past attempts at creating what was derisively called the "A.B.D." degree (All But Dissertation) didn't go anywhere. But changing the requirements for the Ph.D. is a sound idea. Since all universities have a seven- to eleven-year probation period for faculty, there's plenty of time to correct mistakes. If the Ph.D. lock is picked, other institutional checks could go, too. Permanent tenure could perhaps be replaced by long-term, renewable performance contracts—another reform that is periodically proposed and rejected.

Princeton's Institute for Advanced Studies and Oxford's All Souls College are two places that honestly acknowledge their missions. Their faculties, interested in research, happily supervise others who are interested in research. There's no make-believe that a good teacher of graduate students necessarily wants to teach undergraduates. Those who want to do the work of teaching can spend their time, equally paid and equally pleased, with younger students. Sabbaticals and summers allow plenty of time for the research most professors do. Frequently, in fact, the busiest and best teachers are the best publishers. Columbia's Lionel Trilling, for example, produced some of the most popular essays of mid-century criticism while teaching 11 hours a week; he wrote his novel during a sabbatical. Similarly, C.S. Lewis once noted: "I found, as always, that the ripest [teachers] are kindest to the raw [students] and the most studious have most time to spare."

Reward is the rub, of course: Division of labor—an old idea that somehow never penetrated the ivy thicket—can't mean division of prestige. If the distinction between genuine research and make-research is made, the faculties are back where they were before the herd mentality took hold. As George Lyman Kittredge, the legendary Harvard professor, is supposed to have said early in the century when asked why he had never taken a Ph.D.: "But who would examine me?" Presumably, no one was qualified to. It's too bad Kittredge's successors in academe have inherited his attitude rather than his skill. □

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What Clinton and Dole Could Learn from the Teamsters

A bold idea for reforming the parties: A payroll plan for small donations can curb the monied interests

by Brooks Jackson

My favorite goo-goo reformer was Jackie Presser. Corrupt as the late Teamsters boss probably was, he practiced a form of good government that Bill Clinton and Bob Dole ought to imitate. That's because when it comes to political fundraising, the Teamsters' operation is, financially speaking, not only cleaner than the campaign finance efforts of either the Democratic or Republican party, but stronger at the grassroots level. Sure, there are plenty of worthy campaign finance reform plans floating around Washington these days, but the one the truckers cooked up is the best I've seen yet.

The Teamsters' system comes down to four words: a buck a week. While the national parties have become exclusive clubs for big donor lobbyists, corporate executives, and millionaires, the Teamsters' political action committee (PAC) is supported almost exclusively by rank-and-file members who voluntarily donate just one dollar every week directly from their paychecks. Using this democratic device, Presser, bless him, built the Teamsters' PAC into the mightiest political war chest of them all. But this system does more than merely raise steady and staggering sums. If the buck-a-week plan were applied to national campaign finance, it would connect the parties to the people, and more importantly, take a bold step toward limiting the excessive influence of special interests. And it's a reform that is relatively inexpensive to implement and could be enacted regardless of what happens to more controversial proposals, such as spending limits, taxpayer subsidies for congressional candidates, or the elimination of PACs.

Of course, none of this is intended as an endorsement of the Teamsters' PAC, or any other. (PACs are just the kind of special interest groups whose influence needs to be reduced, because they spend their money to buy access and push self-serving legislation at the expense of the rest of us.) But it is an endorsement of the way in which the Teamsters raise their political funds. "A broad-based PAC is the closest thing to real democracy there is," says David Sweeney, the Teamsters' legislative director. "When little people get together to pool their bucks, that's what democracy is all about." It's hard to argue with that.

It's also hard to argue with the need for some fresh ideas. Congress has waffled for years on campaign finance reform. And Clinton has recently shied away from some of his tougher campaign rhetoric on the issue. Democrats and Republicans remain miles apart on the issue, and Republicans can probably block any purely partisan plan with a Senate filibuster. But the public has grown weary of lobbyists and special interest money. The time has come, I humbly submit, to give the buck-a-week plan the hearing it deserves.

Dollar bill

Here's how it works: Any Teamsters member who wants to give to the PAC signs a form, which goes to his employer's payroll office. The money is then deducted from the member's paycheck, along with union dues, taxes, and the rest. The Teamsters have worked this out through collective bargaining, but it would be a relatively simple matter to set up a similar system for political parties through legislation. All employers would offer voluntary payroll withholding for employees who want to make donations to political parties. The IRS would collect the money for parties just as it now administers payroll withholding for federal income taxes, Social Security, and Medicare.

Brooks Jackson is a correspondent with Cable News Network's Special Assignment Unit and the author of Honest Graft: Big Money and the American Political Process.

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This one swift measure wipes out a number of problems. Under the current system, only a small elite can afford to give $1,000 to a political candidate, the legal maximum at the federal level. Just a handful of millionaires and big corporations can afford to give $100,000, the standard unit for those unregulated "soft money" donations to the parties.

Despite the high entry fee, there are plenty of players. At the pinnacle of the Republican party finance machine, for example, is "Team 100," a coterie of real-estate developers, Wall Street dealmakers, and other rich folks who funnel $100,000 checks to the Republican National Committee. (Some, coincidentally, were made ambassadors by President Bush.) Not to be outdone, Ron Brown, during his stewardship of the Democratic party, set the price of admission to the DNC's "Managing Trustee" program at $200,000. Brown, formerly a wealthy special interest lobbyist himself, is now in the Clinton cabinet, and "managing trustee" Pamela Harriman has been nominated to become U.S. ambassador to France.

And it's not just ambassadorships at stake. Consider Dwayne Andreas and the company he heads, Archer Daniels Midland. It gave nearly $1.1 million to the Republican party during the 1991-1992 election cycle and $277,500 to the Democratic party. Andreas and his company may, of course, be as interested in good government as the next guy, but they are also keen to make both Democrats and Republicans aware of the importance of continuing the generous taxpayer subsidies that help create an artificial market for ethanol, of which Archer Daniels Midland is the nation's main supplier. Ethanol, by the way, was just exempted from the Clinton administration's proposed energy tax—which in effect gives it an even bigger subsidy than it now enjoys relative to other fuels. Is that all because of politicians' eagerness to appease Midwestern grain farmers, or did Andreas's enormous political contributions help?

It's not fair, of course, to single out Andreas. The United Steelworkers of America gave $403,051 in soft money to various Democratic committees during the past two years. The United Auto Workers gave $235,300. Do those donations have anything to do with Democrats' increasingly protectionist approach on trade issues? And the National Education Association gave the Democrats $415,000. Any connection to the party's reluctance to shake up ossified public school bureaucracies? The tobacco lobby likes to give to both parties. RJR-Nabisco gave $502,955 to the Republicans and $321,000 to the Democrats. Similarly, Philip Morris gave $484,580 to the GOP and $222,500 to various Democratic committees. U.S. Tobacco gave $409,674 to Republicans and $125,346 to Democrats. The Tobacco Institute gave $125,477 to Republicans, $137,275 to Democrats. Any odds on whether Congress will raise tobacco taxes by more than a token amount, even to pay for health coverage? It's these kinds of questions we shouldn't have to ask.

But more and more, the public is asking exactly these questions. In fact, disgust with big money politics goes a long way toward explaining the popular disillusionment with political parties. How else to account for Ross Perot's 19 percent of the vote last year, even though he was widely thought to be a bit loony? Or that Jerry Brown, a born-again state party chairman, was able to outlast all Democrats but Clinton in the primaries by marketing himself with an 800 number and a nothing-over-$100 donation policy? Unfortunately, party professionals are so addicted to big money politics that they claim all "party building" voter contact will stop without it. They fail to grasp that big money is killing the parties, not building them. Democratic and Republican party apparatchiks, instead of catching on to the power of the Perot/Brown messages, keep practicing a perverse twist on Robin Hood—sucking up to the rich to pay their own salaries.

The buck-a-week plan, on the other hand, would give the public the type of democratic politics it demands and deserves. And it would create a powerful incentive for parties to reconnect with voters by expanding person-to-person, grassroots organizing efforts. With a payroll withholding system in place, the parties would be eager to get citizens to sign up as members. And that would require not fancy lunches with corporate execs, but door-to-door sales to convince average voters that the party is on their side.

The parties might imitate the successful door-to-door technique used by the public interest group Citizen Action, which claims about 3 million members in 32 states. "It makes a difference when somebody shows up on the doorstep who's obviously committed," explains Robert Brandon, Citizen Action's national executive director. "People are appreciative of the information you give them, and the fact that somebody is out there fighting the good fight." As a result, Citizen Action is closer to the voters than either party. "Take health care, for example," says Brandon. "We've been canvassing and working on

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this issue for the last eight years." Democrats didn't discover the election-winning potential of that issue until the Pennsylvania special Senate election in 1991—and George Bush never caught on.

Such a door-to-door technique meshes nicely with the type of organizing the party professionals claim they now aspire to. Citizen Action "is not a bad model for us," the new Democratic party chairman, David Wilhelm, told *Rolling Stone* recently. "They are everywhere. They knock on doors and say to people, 'Look, this is what we care about. Will you become a member of our organization?'"

That personal contact with voters would make it profitable for parties to emphasize positions that ordinary citizens see as appealing, sensible, and relevant to their lives. Do voters want health care reform? A fix for urban schools? The party with the most appealing plans would raise the most money, and get the most votes. "They would have a selling job to do," says the Teamsters' Sweeney. "They would have to convince the citizenry that they were about doing good."

Pac it in

The worst part of today's system is that it practically forces parties and candidates to rely on a narrow elite. That's because big donations cost little to raise; those fatcat dinners consume only about a nickel of every dollar they generate. Small donations are much more expensive because raising them requires mass mailings and telemarketing, gobbling up perhaps 40 percent of the typical $50 check. And unfortunately, matters are growing worse each year because direct mail is becoming more expensive and less effective. As things stand, a party that receives a $1 gift is actually losing money, because it costs more than $1 to process.

The buck-a-week payroll plan, however, would radically change those economics. Thanks to the payroll withholding plan, the payoff from a successful fundraising appeal would be a steady stream of income—$52 a year from each donor—that would roll in automatically, steadily, dependably. The handling costs would be nominal. Companies withholding money for the Teamsters' PAC, for example, send a bill for their added payroll processing costs. "When all is said and done, [administration costs] might be between $75,000 and $100,000 a year," says Sweeney. That's roughly two cents of every $10.

The largest cost involved would be organizing efforts to convince citizens to give in the first place—in other words, selling the party platform across the country. But using Citizen Action again as a model illustrates how real party building can actually pay for itself, and then some. The group fields about 1,000 canvassers year-round. In summer, the door-to-door army grows to about 1,800. And those organizers sign up more than enough dues-paying members to pay their own salaries, which are generally under $300 per week, plus bonuses based on performance.

And while the costs of raising and collecting the money would be minimal, the amounts raised could easily match those hauled in through the current big donor system. Consider the Teamsters' PAC, which is officially called the "Democratic Republican Independent Voter Education Committee" (DRIVE). Before Presser began pushing the payroll plan, DRIVE was stuck in neutral: Despite a union membership of 1.9 million, the truckers had contributed a paltry $244,331 to DRIVE in the two years leading up to the 1980 elections. The buck-a-week plan radically changed that. In the 1990 elections, DRIVE raised $10.5 million even as the number of Teamsters steadily declined. In the 1992 elections, with the economy sagging and total Teamsters union membership dropping to fewer than 1.5 million, the PAC managed to raise $9.4 million for the two year cycle—still the King Kong of PACs.

If the Teamsters can raise nearly $10 million every two years from a base of 1.4 million members, think what the Democratic and Republican parties could do with their much broader bases. Currently, there are nearly 189 million Americans of voting age, and about 38 million adults consider themselves strong Democrats. If the party can convince just 5 percent of those strong Democrats to give a buck a week, it would bring in nearly $200 million every two year election cycle. That's far more than the record total that all parties' national committees received in the last election from all sources combined. And the donation rate might even turn out to be higher. About 7 percent of Teamsters members choose to give to its PAC. And the United Auto Workers gets about 27 per-

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cent of its members to give to its PAC through a similar buck-a-week checkoff system. Democrats could conceivably push the contribution rate high enough to get rid of funding from millionaires, PACs, corporations, and labor unions—and still have plenty left to take over full funding of all the general election campaigns of its candidates for the House and Senate, freeing the candidates from the need for special interest money. Campaign finance nirvana would be at hand.

The Republicans have already moved in this direction by persuading many of their regular donors to allow the party to make an automatic, periodic debit to their personal checking accounts, just the way many people now make their mortgage payments.

Party professionals might be surprisingly willing to give up soft money if only they had an attractive alternative. Besides all the bad publicity that soft money brings, there's the generally unappreciated fact that it's a headache to use. It can only be spent legally for such indirect activities as compiling voter lists and buying generic commercials that say "vote Democratic" or "vote Republican," without naming any candidates. On the other hand, small donations that comply with the federal limits can be used in direct support of the party's candidates for Congress or the White House.

Cash cowed

Not only could the buck-a-week plan make it easier to get rid of soft money, but it would pave the way for, and ideally be combined with, other reforms as well. The major barrier to getting rid of PACs, for example, is that they currently supply so much of the campaign money incumbents spend. For example, PACs gave more than half the reelection money of the Democrats who control the House, including $1.2 million in the last election to House Majority Leader Richard Gephardt. But if parties had an ample supply of clean money from rank-and-file members, politicians might feel less horrified about giving up existing sources of money.

In addition, many Republicans see no problem with a 100 percent federal income-tax credit for small political donations, even though that would represent a substantial federal subsidy for House and Senate campaigns. So, if Congress won't go for serious public financing, why not couple the buck-a-week plan with a 100 percent tax credit capped at $52 annually? Give a buck a week to your party, get it back in your tax refund check. Any party that can't market a deal like that deserves to lose elections.

The buck-a-week plan would, of course, face some minor obstacles. "You would have very, very strong institutional resistance within the IRS," predicts former IRS Commissioner Fred Goldberg. Adding more lines to tax withholding forms clutters them and costs money, he says. But "mechanically, it can be done." Organized labor might squirm at the idea of sharing the payroll mechanism—a political golden goose if there ever was one—with parties. Business groups would object reflexively to another federal mandate and small businesses in particular would seek an exemption, claiming paperwork headaches. A few liberals still equate the notion of strong parties with Tammany Hall corruption. Lawmakers of both parties may secretly want to keep parties weak, allowing themselves more freedom to maneuver. Careful drafting would be needed to deny the benefit of the payroll plan to kooky fringe groups trying to claim political party status while still recognizing the legitimate claims of bona fide minor parties, such as New York's Liberal and Conservative parties.

Such objections, however, pale when set against the major attractions. There could be lots more money for both parties. Stronger parties mean relatively weaker special interests. Perverse incentives would be reversed, and parties would find it profitable to behave more like public interest groups. Candidates could shift the humiliating and time-consuming task of fundraising to party professionals. Better candidates would run for Congress if the parties provided enough money, and they would stand a better chance of winning. In fact, the buck-a-week plan would be worth trying even if no other reforms are enacted.

Would it work? There are no guarantees. (Perhaps parties have nothing worth a buck a week to offer voters.) But Bob Beckel, a Democratic bigwig and former Mondale campaign manager, says that he, for one, is ready to give it a go: "Maybe we have to say this soft-money thing is so bad and so insidious, we just have to roll the dice."

So, Bill Clinton, Bob Dole, anyone out there: Steal my idea. Why not? I stole it from the Teamsters myself. □

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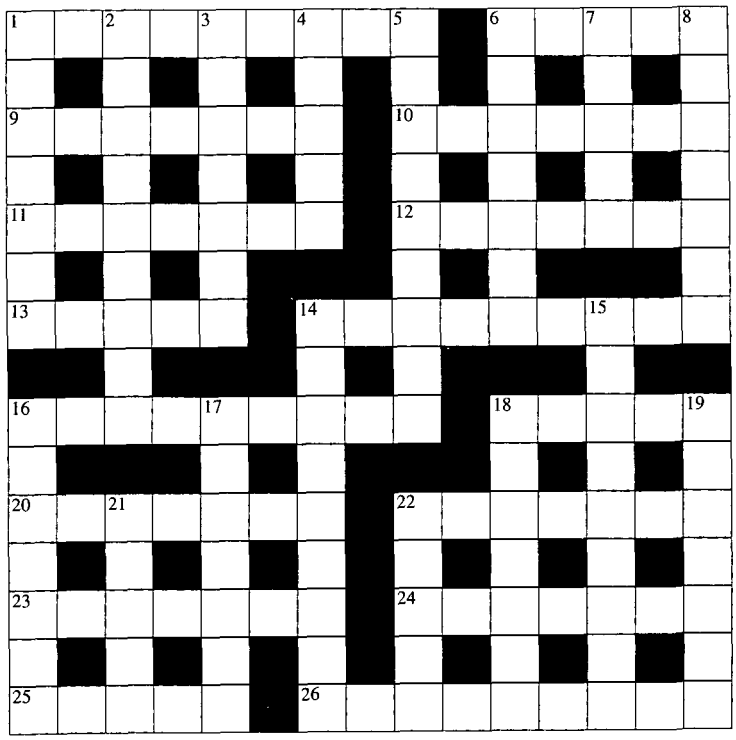
POLITICAL PUZZLE

by John Barclay

The numbers indicate the number of letters and words, e.g. (2,3) means a two-letter word followed by a three-letter word. Groups of letters, e.g. USA, are treated as one word.



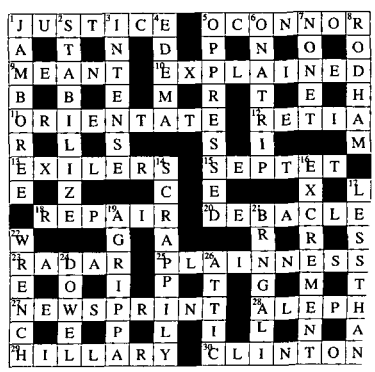
ACROSS

1. The front disguise around turn for meeting place. (9)
6. Gym catch returned for contractor. (5)
9. New England turned brown just getting started. (7)
10. Friend takes in skill and first illness to limited extent. (7)
11. Moron with ease playing another. (3,4)
12. Objects around 51 thoughts. (7)
13. Bright but short about being accepted. (5)
14. Worst mind changes and loses weight. (5, 4)
16. Sees crops' new techniques. (9)
18. To join race initially every new terrier eats rats. (5)
20. Revised titles about middle of rehab for plant. (7)
22. Most err shaking shakes. (7)
23. Ten hire new place for hanging. (2,5)
24. Infant attire returned to last shop at no further charge. (7)
25. Concise model reset. (5)
26. Heave, scattering rest around for litter. (9)

DOWN

1. Suppliers from North in wandering droves. (7)
2. State differently 99 "ex-women." (3,6)
3. Organ study makes tool go away by end of May. (7)
4. Mediator about in wind indicator. (5)
5. Pier clubs are organized political units. (9)
6. Lets off or leaps in confusion. (7)
7. Rear a sire differently. (5)
8. He is a leader awkwardly in style. (7)
14. Crude settles as mixture. (9)
15. Care provider adjusted hat to pose. (9)
16. Easy disturbance for NFL player. (7)
17. Far out divorcée changing meter. (7)
18. Severe adjustment time for high spot. (7)
19. Adopt new position without prisoner for inhabitant. (7)
21. Bury in uncertain territory. (5)
22. Prate about illumination. (5)

Answers to last month's puzzle:



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Vintage Whine

What would Harry Truman think about the thirtysomethings?

by Jonathan Rauch

Declining Fortunes: The Withering of the American Dream
Katherine S. Newman
Basic Books, $23

Something happened to the American economy around 1973. We don't know exactly what, but we do know the consequences: Productivity growth slowed markedly and has never fully recovered. From 1947 to 1973, hourly work output increased by 3 percent a year; afterwards, by less than 1 percent. Productivity drives living standards. When it slows, so does the growth of wealth. Median family income doubled from 1947 to 1973; since then, it has risen only slightly.

This is the great economic change of our time, and it is where *Declining Fortunes* begins. Katherine S. Newman, an anthropologist at Columbia University, sets out to explore how economic change translates into generational friction. In a northern New Jersey town near New York City—"Pleasanton," as she calls it (all names are changed to protect privacy)—she conducts more than 150 interviews. And she concludes: "There is virtually no aspect of daily life that has been left unruffled by the shock of declining fortunes."

Newman is at her best parsing the intricacies of middle-class hopes and discontents. She has an attentive ear and a gift for putting her finger on points of social tension. Subterranean economic change, she demonstrates, leads to eruptions of moral strife. For example, in the age of the working woman, who is a moral mother? The mother who works may be frowned upon as materialistic, but the mother who stays home may be frowned upon as unfulfilled. Or again: Baby boomers, she says, feel economically insecure and so wait longer to have children. "Hypercalculation thus replaces the casual, unplanned style of pregnancy of the postwar parents." This opens another values gap. Postwar parents think their children are being too finicky and waiting too long; the baby boomers think they are being prudent.

Jonathan Rauch is a contributing editor of National Journal *and the author of* Kindly Inquisitors: The New Attacks on Free Thought.

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All of that is good and useful stuff. Newman's insistence on rooting her analysis in the real lives of real people, supported by her clear and unpretentious prose, makes her book a good example of how the anthropologist's lens can help bring American life into sharper focus. But wait a minute. The book wants to do more than map the changing middle-class mindset. Is it also selling a world view, a new victimology, beginning with its title, "Declining Fortunes"? Something fishy is going on here.

Pleasanton in the fifties—and, by extension, America in the fifties—is bathed in a nostalgic glow. The town was an upwardly mobile melting-pot community where houses were cheap, jobs secure and plentiful, hard work amply rewarded. It was the town of the American Dream. But those days are gone, and, through the bleak picture of the present day sketched by Newman, you'd think the Great Depression had returned. "Contractions, leveraged buyouts, bankruptcies, layoffs, and general despair over the state of American competitiveness—these are the headlines in today's business pages." Manufacturing is "on the skids." Baby boomers comprise "the first generation since the Great Depression to have a lower standard of living than its parents." And so on.

American manufacturing is not "on the skids." Newman does not mention that total compensation has risen 15 percent since the early seventies. She says that the median income has fallen since 1973, which is wrong. And she says that the eighties brought "steep declines in the purchasing power of the vast majority of Americans," which is bizarre.

This is, very largely, nonsense. American manufacturing is not "on the skids"; mainly, it is thriving. Newman mentions the "slow descent" of wages but does not mention that total compensation (a better measure which includes fringe benefits) has risen 15 percent since the early seventies. She says that the median income has fallen since 1973, which is wrong. And she says that the eighties brought "steep declines in the purchasing power of the vast majority of Americans," which is bizarre.

One soon begins to notice that Newman trots out all the depressing economic statistics while leaving all the cheerful ones on the shelf. She notes that inequality has increased, but omits that the effects are relatively minor; overall distribution of income has changed remarkably little since World War II. In 1949, the bottom fifth of families received 4.5 percent of the income, the top fifth 42.7 percent; in 1991, the figures were 4.5 percent and 44.2 percent, respectively. Some sea-change. Partly because more poor and near-poor families are headed by single women, family income has fallen since the early seventies, but by and large the middle has held its ground or gained. True, the richest fifth gained faster than the middle fifth, but that's not the same as "declining fortunes." Newman bemoans the shrinking middle class. Says economist Gary Burtless of the Brookings Institution: "The middle class is shrinking, all right, but partly because they're jumping above."

She writes of recessions as though they were permanent. "There appears to be no end in sight to the economic downturn of the late eighties." Oops. And: "Unemployment was at record levels in the early eighties, as the impact of the 1979-82 recession devastated the younger boomers." But the Reagan recession ended, unemployment fell, and the otherwise mediocre eighties expansion created 18 million new jobs. She points out that home ownership rates have declined for people under 50 but does not mention that homes are greatly improved. For instance, three-fourths have central air conditioning, twice the percentage of 1971.

I'm the first to agree that the post-1973 economy has been disappointing, but Newman is not playing fair. Instead, she is out to show that the

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complaints of the baby boomers are righteous. And they do complain. Her first-quoted interviewee is a woman ("Lauren") who "was born in the halcyon days of the fifties." Lauren cannot afford a home in Pleasanton (which is, after all, a suburb of New York City). "They lied to me," Lauren says. "I worked all those years and then I didn't get to candy land. The prize wasn't there, damn it."

There's more going on here than credulity, I think. Newman is constructing a new victim class. Many people would already include among such classes blacks, Hispanics, Asians, women, American Indians, the poor, and others. Newman seems to want to take the next logical step. She wants to extend victim status to an entire generation.

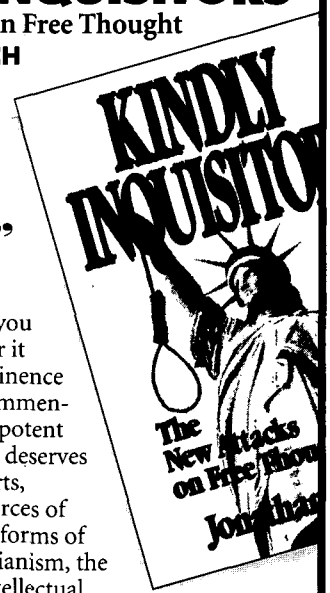
In her world view, the younger generations were walking in the park one day when the economy fell on their heads. Her presentation is moral: They suffer but are innocent. "There is no justice in the notion that Mr. Flory was in the right place at the right time, whereas [his daughter] Mary and her husband had the bad taste to be born at the wrong historical moment." It's unfair, Newman concludes: "At the very least, sympathy would seem to be in order . . . Surely the country must realize that they are deserving of some concern, some recognition of the price they have had to pay for maturing in the wrong place at the wrong time."

Okay, some sympathy is in order. There is a large element of arbitrariness in economic change. But let's also be a little more frank about the causes of middle class discontent. Among those causes are middle class greed and self-pity. Reading Newman, you would never guess that the middle class electorate—baby boomers and their parents—have had anything to do with the budget deficit, which burns up desperately needed capital; or with the extravagant expansion of Social Security, whose tax bite has quadrupled since 1950 and hurts poorer and younger families the most; or with Medicare, which helped send health care costs into the stratosphere; or with the home-mortgage tax deduction, which helped inflate the price of housing for first-time buyers; or with a thousand other subsidies and guarantees which the middle class has ladled upon itself, at great cost, over the last several decades.

I can't prove it, but I believe that a person of Harry Truman's generation would have felt ashamed to hear the way many of this book's interviewees talk. He would have pointed out that, despite everything, America is richer today than it or any other country has ever been, and more secure than it has been in 100 years. He would also have pointed out that the average U.S. high school student does as much homework in a week as her Japanese counterpart does in one day. Could that have something to do with the sad fate of the middle class?

I realized the complaining was getting out of hand when I came to the "successful corporate attorney" who "is earning more than her father ever did." "God," the young lawyer moans, "if we work so hard to get where we've got, there should be a better reward for it." This is embarrassing. Newman intends to paint a picture of a victimized generation. What emerges instead is a nation of whiners, abetted by intellectuals (and politicians) who pander to middle-class self-pity. Let us hope that this book is not translated into Japanese. □

KINDLY INQUISITORS
The New Attacks on Free Thought
JONATHAN RAUCH



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Broadcast Blues

Why Zbigniew Brzezinski thinks Bart Simpson is a threat to the New World Order

by Jacob Heilbrunn

Out of Control
Zbigniew Brzezinski. *Scribner Sons, $21*

Zbigniew Brzezinski is a busy man. Between "traveling, consulting, speaking, and teaching," he required the help of no fewer than six research assistants to extrude his latest book, *Out of Control*. It reflects the pace of his life—harried, rushed, and at the mercy of deadlines.

At least one deadline is self-imposed. Brzezinski must hurry because the end is drawing nigh. The looming catastrophe—not environmental, but moral and political—renders lengthy research and contemplation a frivolous luxury. The outcome is a farrago of half-baked analyses which suggests an author, much like the world he seeks to describe, careening out of control.

His aim is ambitious. Each of his three theses—the significance of the failure of totalitarianism, the emerging geopolitical order, and the future of American foreign policy—might require a book of its own. Brzezinski himself declares in his introduction that *Out of Control* provides the capstone to his earlier books, *Between Two Ages, Game Plan,* and *The Grand Failure: The Birth and Death of Communism in the Twentieth Century*. Where those works concentrated on policy prescriptions, Brzezinski now seeks to provide a sweeping philosophical grounding for American foreign policy.

Unfortunately, the sober tone and lucid prose of his previous works are scarcely in evidence. Brzezinski's philosophy, such as it is, consists largely of tirades against American sexual license and self-indulgence. His fulminations come closer to those of a crank than a geostrategist. Indeed, one of the most peculiar parts of Brzezinski's new book is his somersault from geostrategy to morality. In *Game Plan*, Brzezinski applies the terms "imperial system" and "empire" equally to the Soviet Union and the United States, thus stressing the fact that the confrontation between the two superpowers was morally neutral in character. (In an interview with *National Interest* in 1986, Brzezinski dismissed the belief that the United States stood for freedom as "a very American view.") There is something paradoxical about jumping from soft-pedaling the ideological character of the struggle between the superpowers to excoriating Americans for their lack of morality once the conflict has concluded. Finally, his book does in fact degenerate into foreign policy prescriptions that pack all the punch of a musty *Foreign Affairs* article. There is more foam than beer in this brew.

To be sure, Brzezinski's passages on the demise of communism form some of the soundest in his book, but they do not get much beyond the obvious. Calling the twentieth century the age of "megadeath," Brzezinski estimates that some 87 million people have died violent deaths in its course. He correctly assigns the lion's share of the blame for the century's catastrophes to the quartet of Lenin, Stalin, Hitler, and Mao, and he observes that the sheer number of lives consumed in the name of secular utopias makes

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communism "the most costly human failure in all of history."

Evil personalities alone could not have accomplished such devastation without the ideas and ideals which these dictators appropriated and transformed into deadly instruments. Embarking on a Cook's tour of political theory, Brzezinski traces a direct line from the French of 1789 to the Bolsheviks in 1917. At the same time, he draws an explicit parallel between Lenin and Hitler, arguing that both were bent on class warfare. The result is confusion. Lenin's universalist ideals are incompatible with the racist ideology at the core of Hitler's program. A byproduct of this facile analogizing is the effacement of what was distinctive about Hitler's aims. Where Lenin and the Bolsheviks sought to eliminate classes and sculpt a new proletarian man, the Nazis directed their efforts at annihilating the Jews and "honorary Jews," such as Gypsies, as a race. Brzezinski's style in this section also suffers the effects of slapdash theorizing. Take his comment that Stalin's and Hitler's "schemes quite literally verged on the lunatic," or that Hitler's *Mein Kampf* and Alfred Rosenberg's *Race and Race History* "justifiably raised serious questions regarding the sanity of the respective author." They did not "verge" on; they *were* lunatic.

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The skill with which Lenin and Hitler manipulated their followers leads Brzezinski to fear that Russian, African, and Asian masses are similarly vulnerable today, and that a replay of the first half century is at hand. Yet in contrast to 1941, America in 1993 is incapable of coming to the rescue because it is rotting from within. Dubbing America a "permissive cornucopia," Brzezinksi warns that the erosion in moral standards arising from a preoccupation with material and sensual self-gratification is sapping the United States' ability to assume world leadership in the vacuum created by the collapse of the Soviet empire. The principal agent of destruction? . . . television. Moral corruption and cultural decadence are being beamed not only to Americans, but to the world:

> With audiences around the world increasingly glued to television sets, there is nothing comparable, either in the era of enforced religious orthodoxy or even at the highpoint of totalitarian indoctrination, to the cultural and philosophical conditioning that television exercises on the viewers.

This from the man who along with Carl J. Friedrich pioneered the concept of the totalitarian state! The fact is that television does not condition audiences, but rather reflects prevailing mores. These reckless statements more effectively trivialize the notion of totalitarianism than any revisionist historian has ever done. Brzezinski's complaints about decadence and "lifestyles"—the latter term now something of a codeword for homosexuality—echo the fears of neoconservatives like Midge Decter, who were loudly worrying in the 1970s that toleration of homosexuals would weaken the masculinity and therefore the will of Americans to combat communism.

Certainly Brzezinski is right to point to the social and economic ills that afflict the United States. The soaring national debt, the collapse of the manufacturing industry, the abysmal educational system, the rise in racial tensions—all are dutifully trotted out. Brzezinski lists the problems but provides neither analytical tools nor policy recommendations to deal with them. Given his picture of an American public hooked on TV images and wallowing in material delights, it's hard to see what rational arguments could move them. Moreover, the link between the decline in manufacturing (a feature of all advanced societies) and sexual indulgence is utterly obscure, as is the connection to poor schools. But Brzezinski contents himself with mounting his favorite hobby-horse and decrying the "degree to which the most popular programs devised for young audiences . . . concentrate on decadence

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and debauchery while applauding the rejection of traditional authority." One wonders what programs he is referring to. *The Simpsons*? Brzezinski, who seems to have no qualms about appearing on television as often as possible, must spend the rest of his time watching it.

Much of Brzezinski's jeremiad on morality imitates the pope's criticisms of popular culture, but Brzezinski's bristling declarations lack the calm, confident, papal tone. Christianity, asserts Brzezinski, means that Europe, unlike Japan, is "in its very body and soul universalist rather than exclusivistic." The universalism of Europe, supposed to derive from the medieval Church, did not prevent the bloodiest conflicts and the worst atrocities in human history. Those murderous impulses linger on in the form of contempt for and hatred of foreigners and asylum-seekers.

Yet Brzezinski claims that Europe's "rich philosophic and artistic tradition . . . could help infuse into American mass culture . . . greater intellectual content, thereby somewhat tempering its crass and vulgar edge." These assertions are likely to strike Americans as little more than snobbery. Paradoxically, for a political scientist, Brzezinski scants the political dimension. For Nazi ideologues and intellectual fellow-travelers of Nazism such as Heidegger, the "crassness and vulgarity" of democracy, especially democracy American style, called for a sweeping purge of popularly-based regimes. On the postwar European Left, Adorno and Horkheimer contended that pleasure is inimical to thought, and Marcuse lashed out in the sixties against the "Coca-Colazation" of France. In truth, vulgarity is part of democracy. It was no accident, as the Marxists used to say, that the Soviet Union was more successful at keeping pornography at bay than the West.

Nevertheless, the moral and ethical criteria of America, to use Brzezinski's language, are probably at a higher pitch today than at almost any previous point in American history (and at a lowpoint in Europe, as the current rot in Italy suggests). Consider, for example, the selfless-

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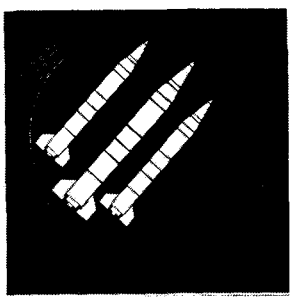
ness of the expedition to Somalia and the dropping of supplies by air to Bosnia. On the domestic front, the enthusiastic response among college students at American University and at Rutgers to Clinton's appeal for national service is heartening.

Strikingly, Brzezinski wants to resuscitate the United States not in order to help Americans as an end in itself, but rather so that they will be fit and ready to assume global responsibilities. Small wonder that foreign affairs and our foreign policy elite alike are regarded with such skepticism by the public. Brzezinski would have the U.S. lead a global confederation—a visionary scheme that he espouses but never develops. The evidence that Brzezinski adduces on the rise of nationalist tensions does little to buttress his audacious claim that only a global confederation will halt a slide into anarchy. As Boris Yeltsin's current efforts in Russia demonstrate, nationalism, if it makes for stability and is accompanied by a modicum of freedom and room to breathe, may not be a bad thing.

Brzezinski will have none of this. Determined to find a new role for the United States as the 21st century approaches, he exhorts Americans to abandon their hedonistic ways and launch a global crusade for democracy. But why should a permissive society embark on any measures of self-improvement or seek to improve the lot of others? Ironically, though Brzezinski seeks to provide a primer for a new century, his prescriptions mirror those at the turn of this century. His quaint emphasis on morality and fitness is reminiscent of Theodore Roosevelt's, General Leonard Wood's, and Henry Stimson's exhortations in 1916 to the scions of the American upper class to steel themselves for warfare. Today, such sentiments point America in the direction of endless and reckless intervention in a helter-skelter world. Those injunctions may have suited an America nervously edging onto the world stage, but on the eve of the 21st century, they offer a script calculated to send the United States spinning out of control. □



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POLITICAL BOOKNOTES

At The Hand of Man: Peril and Hope for Africa's Wildlife
Raymond Bonner
Knopf, $24

By Ann O'Hanlon

Raymond Bonner moved to east Africa in 1988 to write for *The New Yorker*, neatly in time to watch the 1989 global ban on ivory take effect. Enchanted by the continent's peoples and wildlife, Bonner explored the interplay of the two as they relate to wildlife conservation. He discovered that American wildlife organizations such as the World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF) and the African Wildlife Federation (AWF) pay scant attention to local peoples while establishing wildlife policy and distort facts when it is conducive to fundraising. The case in point is, of course, elephants and the argument for a total ban on ivory. Both WWF and AWF paid exaggerated attention to the case of the elephant (elephants have never been doomed to extinction; in fact, several countries had to stabilize their elephant populations well before the 1989 ban) once they discovered this was a fool-proof recipe for fundraising. Bonner himself was seduced into focusing on pachyderms, and he serves up some juicy reporting on the politics of elephants. However, if his topic is "Peril and Hope for Africa's Wildlife," as the subtitle promises, Bonner falls short.

The ban on ivory, announced in 1989 at the initiation of WWF and AWF, was an abrupt reversal of both organizations' prior position of allowing the sale of some ivory. The wisdom of allowing ivory sales is at least threefold. First, elephant populations outgrow their habitat's support capacity and therefore must be kept from trampling the forest and farmland around them and dying of starvation. The tusks from these elephants, and from elephants who die natural deaths, should not go to waste. Second, putting a value on the elephants—outside of the western aesthetic value that many Africans don't have the luxury to share—is the best way to ensure that those peoples work for the survival of the species. Finally, the African people who cope with these dangers should be the people setting and implementing policy, both because it is their land and resource, and because their involvement is a fundamental precursor to caring for the survival of the species. No foreign government that pushed for the ban on ivory ever compensated local populations for their loss of income from ivory sales, nor included any Africans in policy making, an attitude Bonner refers to as "eco-colonialist."

Though Bonner is critical of a number of conservation organizations, he serves up a particularly thorough indictment of WWF. The organization provided the Zimbabwean Department of National Parks and Wildlife Management with a helicopter used to gun down poachers on sight, killing a total of at least 57 men. A lifelong conservationist working in Namibia described the average poacher as "an average, normal guy, a poor farmer who is trying to feed his family." There were in-house arguments at WWF over the project, but it later denied knowing how the helicopter was being used.

WWF's "1001 Club," a fundraising gimmick conceived by South African tobacco businessman and WWF boardmember Anton Rupert, is made up of 1,000 individuals who have given $10,000 to the WWF, the 1001st being Prince Bernhard of the Netherlands, a former WWF president. The secret list of members includes a disproportionate percentage of South Africans, all too happy in an era of social banishment to be welcomed into a socially elite society. Other contributors include businessmen with suspect connections, including organized crime, environmentally destructive development, and corrupt African politics. Even an internal report called WWF's approach egocentric and neocolonialist. (The report was largely covered up.)

The neocolonialist charge gets at a number of uncomfortable truths. The United States and other western nations have helped create a demand for ivory—thus contributing directly to elephant poaching and the ivory trade—and supported many a politically corrupt African government that was tied to the ivory trade. Once it became politically or financially expedient for those who had hunted African wildlife to skip the hunt, they did so and asked the rest of the world to go along. Africans were not included in such decisions.

The Africa section of the U. S. office of WWF hired its first black professional in 1991, and WWF-International has yet to hire a single black in its 30-year history. And, if it's possible to rate such overt racism, the African Wildlife Federation is worse due to its name and mission: In its 30 years, it has yet to have a single black on its board of trustees or in its Washington headquarters.

Sorely missing from *At The Hand of Man* is an analysis of why none of the successful small-scale efforts to control elephant populations has been attempted or even proposed at the national level in Africa. What are the hurdles that might obstruct such plans? Not one of the wildlife experts proposes a national or continent-wide strategy for keeping elephant populations in check while simultaneously respecting local cultures and allocating tourist dollars. Nor does Bonner, despite his criticism of the ivory ban. Such may not be a reporter's responsibility, but his omission both of alternative strategies and of obstacles pro-

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hibiting such strategies is frustrating. Bonner claims the western approach to African wildlife management is racism and nothing else. In fact, if racism disappeared tomorrow, Africa's wildlife woes would remain. Topics critical to wildlife management yet barely touched upon in the book—crippling population growth, political corruption, and unstable governments throughout the continent—are as African as elephants and daunting obstacles in the execution of complex policy. And they were, perhaps, factors in the decision to implement the more simplistic ban on ivory than a more complex policy that, no doubt, would have been fairer to the Africans. If Bonner had yielded to his obvious urge to write exclusively about elephants and the ivory trade, perhaps he would have addressed these issues. Instead, he paints a picture that is compelling but incomplete.

Ann O'Hanlon is a returned Peace Corps volunteer and an intern at The Washington Monthly.

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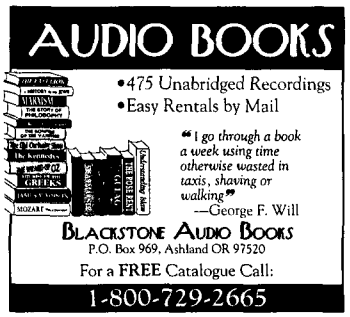

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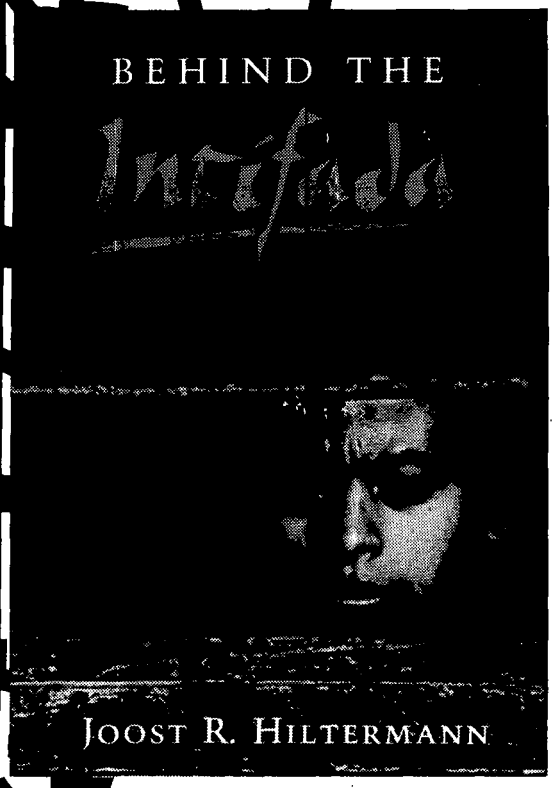

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